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ABSTRACT

This report of a study of the CONSER (CONversion of SERials) project begins with an overview of the history of the project. Developments leading to the study are described in the second section, and the third section addresses data gathering through a literature search, a CONSER participants meeting, and interviews. Findings, discussion, and recommendations on the following issues are presented in the fourth section: (1) CONSER name; (2) project definition; (3) goals and objectives; (4) the CONSER database; (5) database records; (6) operations, including quality control, cataloging rules, database maintenance, NACO (Name Authority Cooperative), self-authentication, training, the Linked Systems Project, holdings, and documentation; (7) statistics; (8) costs of CONSER participation; (9) membership; (10) management structure; and (11) the CONSER coordinator. THe fifth section contains additional observations on criticisms of CONSER, subject analysis, future serials publishing, database ownership, relationship with other bibliographic utilities, and system independence. The appendix includes the work statement guiding this study, a 32-item selective bibliography, a flyer on the study, an Association of Research Libraries newsletter article on the study, a CONSER participants meeting summary, a list of individuals contacted, recommendations of the report, CONSER goals and objectives, and the CONSER plan of action. (10 references) (MES)

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NETWORK PLANNING PAPER NO. 14

THE CONSER PROJECT:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Report of a study conducted
for the Library of Congress by

Jeffrey Heynen and Julia C. Blixrud

Serial Record Division
Processing Services
Library of Congress
Washington

1986

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FOREWORD

The CONSER (CONversion of SERials) Project has come to be recognized as one of the most successful collaborative efforts of the past decade involving the library community. A source database of serials cataloging information comprising more than 625,000 records is available for use not only by project participants and others with online access to the OCLC database, but also to the general library community through distribution of the records and other bibliographic products and services by the Library of Congress and the National Library of Canada. In addition, policy and technical decisions are documented and distributed widely, encouraging standardization of practice and serving to educate library staff concerned with the bibliographic control of serials throughout North America. For the past decade, CONSER has been the single most significant factor toward ensuring a high quality and comprehensive database of serials cataloging data.

As the original goals of the project were accomplished, however, there was an increasing realization that other tasks needed to be done. With that realization, and with an awareness of the changing technological and fiscal environment in which the work must be carried out, it became apparent that more effective and efficient use must be made of shared resources. If the CONSER Project is to meet the needs of the future, then the project requires a reassessment and redefinition of its mission, goals, and objectives.

It was as a first step in confronting that challenge that the Library of Congress contracted this study. I would like to thank Jeffrey Heynen and Julia C. Blixrud of Information Interchange Corporation for their careful analysis of the project's many facets and for their discerning recommendations for the future. And I would like to thank that long list -- too long to record here -- of those who have given their time and effort to the success of the CONSER Project throughout its history and whose sharing of ideas has meant so much to the success of this study. The achievements of the CONSER Project should be applauded, and the cooperative effort that led to those achievements should carry well into the future to benefit the library community still further.

Because of the value of such a study to the library community at large, it is being issued by the Serial Record Division within the Network Planning Paper series. The opinions expressed by those interviewed for the study do not necessarily represent the opinions of their organizations or of the Library of Congress.

Henriette D. Avram
Assistant Librarian
for Processing Services

May 15, 1986

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 1985 the Library of Congress contracted with Jeffrey Heynen and Julia Blixrud of Information Interchange Corp. to study the CONSER Project and prepare a set of recommendations on its future. LC's work statement required the consultants to address four major areas of concern: (1) the goals and objectives of the project, as they are and should be; (2) the tasks that must be performed if goals and objectives are to be achieved; (3) membership criteria, relating both to new and existing participants; and (4) management structure.

The consultants carried out their work mainly through extensive interviews. Persons contacted include members of the CONSER Participants and Operational Staff Groups and other professional staff in CONSER libraries; librarians in institutions that have expressed interest in becoming Participants; senior staff in major institutions, such as LC, OCLC, and RLG; and critics and proponents of the project, both current and past. Others interviewed include individuals in associated projects, such as the CONSER Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project and the U.S. Newspapers Program. In all, 75 persons were contacted. A list is given in Appendix F.

As well as conducting these interviews, the consultants undertook a full literature search, including published sources and unpublished records, and they solicited comments on CONSER from librarians and information professionals at large. They also considered conducting a small cost survey, but were forced to conclude that one would not be feasible.

In addition to presenting the consultants' findings and recommendations, this report gives a brief history of the project, emphasizing those aspects -- such as goals and objectives -- which bear upon prospects for future development. It also describes the current perception of opportunities for improvement in CONSER and sets out the events which led LC to contract for the study.

The consultants' principal findings should not come as a surprise: CONSER is a successful project that has achieved most, if not all of its objectives. Although it has accomplished much, there is much more that it could do, both with respect to goals already set for it and with respect to new ones, made possible by technological and organizational developments of the past few years. At ten years of age -- a ripe old age by project standards -- CONSER shows few signs of decline and many of vigorous health. Nonetheless there is much that could be done to improve its management structure, decision-making processes, membership affairs, and general operations.

Now is an opportune moment for CONSER to re-evaluate itself, to review the past and consider its future growth. A major recommendation of the consultants is the establishment of a strategic planning initiative. LC, OCLC, NLC, together with the

CONSER Participants and Advisory Groups should begin this work as soon as they can, using the forthcoming meetings of both Groups as a starting point.

It is not the task of consultants to lay out a full plan of action. It would be presumptuous of them to attempt to dictate a statement of mission, together with goals, objectives, and tasks, and the full panoply of schedules and task assignments that usually accompany strategic plans. Instead they provide a full set of recommended actions and give a suggested planning framework. The recommendations appear throughout Chapters IV and V of the report and are brought together as a single listing in Appendix G. A structure of a plan is given as Appendix I of the report in expectation that a planning process will now begin for fleshing out and enacting a full-fledged plan in coming months.

As a key element in this process, they recommend that a special planning meeting be held over the course of two or three days at a meeting center specializing in facilitating intensive, small-group sessions. Attendance should be by invitation and limited to decision-makers from CONSER libraries and from institutions that are current or potential CONSER stake-holders. The group should agree in advance to come up with a proposal for a plan of action and an agenda for implementing the plan. CONSER itself, participants and stake-holders, should subsequently be requested to review, revise, and -- one hopes -- put in effect a comprehensive plan.

This report and its recommendations should thus be the working papers of those planning CONSER's future. In addition to recommendations already mentioned, highlights include the following:

The CONSER Advisory Group should be re-constituted and given some responsibility in advising in, and overseeing, planning for CONSER's future.

The CONSER Participants Group is recommended to more formally organize itself, electing a chairperson and establishing a committee structure that has more meaning than that currently in place. It should also more fully recognize itself as the CONSER policy-making body.

CONSER needs more coordination. Along with OCLC, the Library of Congress -- through its Office of the CONSER Coordinator -- and the Participants Group -- through its chair -- should perform this coordination function.

The Library of Congress is urged to take a stronger role within CONSER. LC had been expected to take over complete CONSER management with CONSER II. The results of investigations indicate that many would prefer that LC now take an increased role.

CONSER suffers from a lack of publicity. It should develop a public relations program that will provide the serials information community and those responsible for planning cooperative projects of all types with accurate and timely facts about itself.

CONSER's participants are urged to communicate more with each other as well as with people outside the project. They should take advantage of new means, e.g. electronic mail, for facilitating this internal communication.

There is a need to expand active CONSER membership. A re-established Membership Committee should evaluate applications and seek out prospective participants. Membership includes a responsibility and a willingness to abide by the "agreed-upon principles," and to provide the necessary support for staff training and continuing education. As many members as possible -- both new and existing ones -- should participate in NACO and perform self-authentication. CONSER members that do not meet requirements of membership should be given warning and, if no improvement is made, dropped from membership.

Although it is an important development, the Linked Systems Project will probably not be a panacea for CONSER. CONSER should continue to monitor developments in any bibliographic linking mechanism, but should not rely too heavily on technology to effect improvements.

I

HISTORY OF THE CONSER PROJECT

As a concept, CONSER is over twelve years old. It was first conceived in an Ad Hoc Discussion Group on Serials Data Bases. Also known as the "Toronto Group" and sometimes as the "Anable Group," this body first met informally during the American Library Association's annual conference in June 1973. Richard Anable, convener of the group, had an interest in the issue of machine-readable serials files because he was then investigating the problems associated with them for the National Library of Canada and York University.

Although the group recognized many reasons for establishing a comprehensive North American database of serials titles, one of its primary concerns was the inadequacy of projects for producing union lists of serials.

The group also recognized that (a) the national libraries, other libraries, and the International Serials Data System (ISDS) were not building a serials database fast enough to satisfy the needs of developing library cataloging systems and (b) the database work that was being performed was to some degree duplicative and therefore wasteful. In addition, it recognized the existence of three major barriers preventing both the elimination of duplicated efforts and the rapid building of a comprehensive database:

1. The lack of communication among the generators of machine-readable serials files.
2. The incompatibility of format and/or bibliographic data among existing files.
3. The apparent confusion about the existing and proposed bibliographic description and format "standards."

Participants in the group noted that various committees within the American Library Association (ALA) were concerned with some aspects of these problems, but no one ALA committee or other body was addressing their full scope. They also noted that the creation of a comprehensive database would require the cooperative effort of a number of libraries and the ISDS National Centers in the United States and Canada. For these reasons, they agreed that an attempt should be made to address the problems and to find means for building a cooperative database. The chief use of this database was to be the support of union-list-of-serials activities.

Mr. Anable, Cynthia Pugsley (now Durance) from the University of Waterloo Libraries, and Jay Cunningham from the University-wide Library Automation Program at the University of California, subsequently prepared a position paper outlining the need for such a group on a continuing basis.

After distribution of both the position paper and the minutes

of the June 1973 meeting, the Council on Library Resources (CLR) was contacted and agreed to fund a meeting of a steering committee composed of representatives from interested libraries and library organizations. The committee included representatives from CLR, the Library of Congress (LC), the National Serials Data Program (the United States ISDS agency, located at LC and known as NSDP), the National Library of Canada (NLC), ISDS/Canada (located at NLC), the Ohio College Library Center (as OCLC was then known), the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials (JCULS), the Canadian Union Catalogue Taskgroup and its Subgroup on the Serials Union List, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the University of California University-Wide Library Automation Program (ULAP), the State University of New York (SUNY), Northwestern University, Université Laval, and an observer from the British Library.

The meeting was held on September 21, 1973 at York University in Toronto. Its purposes were as follows:

1. To establish a mechanism for creating a set of agreed-upon practices for converting and communicating machine-readable serials data.

2. To establish a mechanism for cooperatively converting a comprehensive retrospective bibliographic database of serials.[1]

To further these ends, four subcommittees were established:

1. Holding Statement Notation
2. Working Communications Conventions
3. Authority Files
4. Cooperative Conversion Mechanism

During the fall of 1973, the subcommittees met to work on their assigned topics.

An important question addressed by the Steering Committee was that of the organizational structure. The group had no legal status and needed some sort of formal affiliation. After considerable discussion with the Library of Congress, the National Library of Canada, and the Association of Research Libraries, the Council on Library Resources was approached and agreed to become interim manager of the project. CLR also agreed to fund the effort partially.

In addition to their primary, file-building objective, the Steering Committee identified three secondary objectives:

1. To assist the national libraries of both countries (Canada and the United States) in the establishment of a computer-maintained (and hopefully remotely accessible) serials data system. This would be accomplished partly by the very existence of the resulting database, and partly by the experience gained in its establishment.

2. To assist in the definition of the roles of the regional or resource centers in such enterprises.

3. To provide a source database for use within the International Serials Data System, and to seek the active participation of the Canadian and United States ISDS National Centers.

The project did not intend to establish any new standards or cataloging policies. Its leaders planned to create a database that could accommodate past, present, and future standards for format, description, and identification. However, the group recognized the need to reconcile conflicts among existing standards and policies such as the Library of Congress MARC-Serials format, the National Serials Data Program internal format, the International Serials Data System Guidelines, and the draft of the Canadian MARC serials format.

Lawrence Livingston examined the proposition that the best resolution of format and rules conflicts would be the complete recataloging of all serials titles, consistently using one set of rules, and adding all necessary data elements at the point of record creation. He pointed out, however, that this approach was only theoretically possible. None of the participating institutions would have the resources to completely recatalog all of their titles. Even if they could recatalog at the point of entry into the CONSER database, with the formats and rules changing the way they then were, records would require further change almost as soon as they were created.

Mr. Livingston referred to the record-consistency problem as a chicken-and-egg situation: "a project like CONSER cannot succeed without a high degree of consistency and standardization in serials cataloging in many libraries, but something very much like CONSER is required before that degree of consistency and standardization can be attained."[2]

Project planners examined this dilemma. They saw two options for entering records. A participant would either enter completely consistent records (fully upgraded and verified prior to entry) or enter records first and upgrade them over time as resources permitted. After considerable discussion in which the Library of Congress took a very active role, they decided on the second course. The decision was entirely in keeping with the main goal of the project as it had by then evolved. As summarized by the ARL Board of Directors at its meeting on October 5, 1973, this goal was to create "a large, machine-readable serials database, of as high a quality as possible within a reasonably short time, in order to satisfy the burgeoning need by many libraries."[3]

The consequence of this decision was the need for the most flexible system that could be devised. "This," stated Mr. Livingston, "is exactly what CONSER is all about."[4]

Acting upon the decision, project designers recommended creation and adoption of uniform guidelines for record creation and input linked to a prerequisite that all participants agree to abide by them. The guidelines and prerequisite immediately became known as the "agreed-upon practices."

Responsibility for establishing format consistency was given to a Subcommittee on Working Communications Conventions, chaired by James E. Rush. This group came up with a minimum set of data elements to define the least-acceptable CONSER record. Participants would be encouraged to create records that were as complete as possible.

Questions about the bibliographic conventions to be observed (as opposed to the format to be used) also needed to be resolved. The Steering Committee decided that Anglo-American Cataloging Rules as revised were preferred. It was recognized, however, that the rules had been in existence only since 1967 and they had not been adopted by all of the North American library community. Major issues discussed included superimposition and latest-title cataloging.

The file-building effort was planned to be two-fold: batch-loading of existing machine-readable records and online entry of records not yet in machine-readable form. The Cooperative Conversion Subcommittee recommended the OCLC system as a "temporary solution" for creating the database because it would permit both batch-loading and online cataloging and would also accommodate the division of labor by taking advantage of serials catalogers across the continent.[5]

The subcommittee envisioned a project that would produce approximately 200,000 records lasting two years with possible extension to a third. It anticipated participation of no more than fifteen libraries beginning with no fewer than four OCLC members.

Existing files would first be batch-loaded into OCLC. In cataloging, each participant would access a record from the base file. If a match was found and there was no other information to add or change, only the participant's library identifier, or holding symbol, would be added. Modifications or additions to existing records would be made when necessary. When no record existed in the file, the participant would be responsible for creating one. Since all participants would work from their existing catalogs, agreed-upon standards for input would be needed.

The participants would divide the alphabet among themselves. Each participant would agree to work first on currently-received serials. Upon completion of that part of the process, they would go through the rest of the alphabet and enter or "convert" remaining live titles. Finally, resources permitting, they would

return to their assigned portion of the alphabet and begin to add their ceased publications.

A post-edit capability would be developed. The Library of Congress and the National Library of Canada agreed to become Centers of Responsibility to verify certain data elements in each record. They would validate records according to AACR and the ISDS Guidelines. (In addition, the ISSNs and key titles would be verified by the National Serials Data Program and ISDS/Canada). This verification process was referred to as authentication.

During the establishment of priorities for the project, the Steering Committee decided not to wait for the completion of work from the authority file and holdings statement committees before beginning. Instead, the Steering Committee agreed that the bibliographic file-building effort should not be held up pending the availability of an authority file, but that a machine-readable authority file would be a major requirement for the future. Since two Centers of Responsibility (LC and NLC) were already being planned, it was acknowledged that the authority work would be included as a part of their authentication procedures. The level of holdings information needed at the national level was also questioned and, for reasons of practicality, the location symbol of the holding library was determined to be adequate. It was expected that both the authority and holdings committees would continue their work after the project got underway.

When CONSER began, the OCLC database contained relatively few serial records. After examining several large machine-readable serial databases, CLR provided a copy of the Minnesota Union List of Serials (MULS) to OCLC for batch-loading into its database. Along with the Library of Congress and National Library of Canada retrospective serial records, MULS would serve as the base file for the project. Records were loaded during the winter of 1976. Later, records from the Pittsburgh Regional Library Consortium and the Florida Union List of Serials were also contributed to the OCLC system.

The initial group of participating institutions was composed of the Library of Congress and the National Serials Data Program within LC, the National Library of Canada and ISDS/Canada, the National Library of Medicine, the National Agricultural Library, the University-wide Library Automation Program (ULAP) of the University of California, the Minnesota Union List of Serials (MINITEX at the University of Minnesota), the State University of New York and the New York State Library (jointly), Cornell University, and Yale University.

Participants received LC training in 1975 and began online work in the spring of 1976. Bibliographic records for titles were claimed or created, modifications were made online when possible, and surrogates (photocopies of parts of publications to support the bibliographic description) were sent to the appropriate Centers of Responsibility to support authentication work.

"CONSER I" was the term used to describe this first phase of the project. The bibliographic file-building effort was planned to last through November 1977. As stated, project planners considered the use of OCLC an interim solution to the problem of finding a location for the database. They recognized OCLC's advantages, including a proven capability to produce workable network software and support and an existing cataloging network. Nonetheless, they preferred national-level management and operation. They believed that the project should, as soon as practical, be taken over by a national institution, preferably the Library of Congress.

The Library of Congress initially agreed to assume this role. The transfer of management and operational responsibility to LC was to begin the second phase of CONSER. This beginning of "CONSER II" was to occur in 1977.

In October, 1975, with the support of a grant from the Council on Library Resources, LC began an in-depth analysis of the software and additional hardware requirements for this second phase. Upon completion of the analysis, it was expected that design specifications would be written and actual programming would begin.

The study team for CONSER II decided to develop long-term objectives for LC serials processing so that the functions implemented could be integrated into any future systems. Those long-term objectives included initial plans for LC serials automation and for the design of a National Bibliographic Service. LC had been providing national bibliographic services for most of the century and, in 1969, had added machine-readable products to its list of services. CONSER II was to be the serials component of the LC system.

According to an article by Henriette Avram of LC and Richard Anable, then of CLR, the intended purpose of CONSER II was to improve user success in obtaining desired information from serially published materials.[6] The goals of the system would be to:

1. Improve the bibliographic control of serials across institutions.

2. Promote the use of unique identifiers (key title and International Standard Serial Number) by libraries and other secondary information services such as abstracting and indexing services and publishers.

3. Improve the accumulation of and the access to location information for more effective interlibrary loan and resource sharing.

CONSER I experience in the use of the OCLC system was valuable in determining the elements needed for the proposed CONSER

II system. Many of the concepts developed under CONSER I would be carried over. The system would operate in an online mode with decentralized input and centralized authentication. LC and other designated institutions would review and authenticate data and the National Library of Canada would be asked to continue in its role as an authentication center for Canadian imprints.

The system would employ a "locking facility" allowing modification of specified fields only by authorized agencies. The system's searching facility would be an expansion of the existing LC system. Authority control was included in the long-range plan for the serials system (as well as for other forms of materials). Work begun on a standard for computer-to-computer linkage for exchange of bibliographic records would be monitored. It was anticipated that standards for linkages would not be in place by the time CONSER II was implemented, but the planners intended to provide computer-to-terminal (and vice versa) communication to CONSER II participants.

CONSER II would provide a measure of internal control for LC's serial processing activities. It was to have the capability to build the bibliographic record as the physical piece moved through LC's assembly-line cataloging operation. The ISSN and key title would be added to the bibliographic records by the National Serials Data Program. Printed catalog cards would be provided upon the completion of the design of the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials (ISBD(S)). The published New Serials Titles would provide the means for disseminating LC serials cataloging information, CONSER data, and ISSN and key titles in book catalog form. Records would also be distributed in machine-readable form.

CONSER II planners saw an opportunity to expand the system to include organizations that were not necessarily university libraries and named the following in their list of potential participants: U.S. national and federal libraries, the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services (NFAIS), and subscription agencies. Each of these organizations was a link in the serials information chain.

Ms. Avram and Mr. Anable include discussions of the importance of each of these groups in their article. They recognized that U.S. national libraries and GPO have special significance in that they collect and catalog large numbers of materials in specific subject areas.

The need for participation of the abstracting and indexing (A&I) services was recognized, but their involvement had been hindered by the absence of standards for identifying serial publications. With the establishment of the International Serials Data System, this handicap was expected to decrease. The major functions of the ISDS were to register serials on an international basis and provide a standardized description and assignment of unique identifiers for each serial; i.e., the ISSN and key title. The CONSER commitment to incorporate that data

into the bibliographic records would provide an opportunity to increase cooperation between the A&I and library communities.

Subscription agencies were developing automated systems as well during this period and were seen as the best sources of serial frequency, supplier, and price information. Including them in CONSER II would also encourage wider use of unique identifiers for serials.

Selected institutions would have the ability to authenticate specific data elements and each of the external participants in CONSER II would be provided some method of access to the database.

CONSER II planners also expected to provide means for allowing regional union list agencies to input and maintain their holdings files on the LC system. Full investigation and possible development of this function was to be dependent on the standardization of holdings statements.

Also included in the planning for CONSER II was an investigation of the international activities in which the new system might play an important role.

In addition to the distribution of bibliographic records in traditional card, book, and machine-readable forms, LC investigated the possibility of providing other products from the CONSER system. Some of these included: periodic reports of all new records added to the database, periodic dissemination of the complete CONSER II database either in traditional catalog form or in a register form with indexes, and periodic reports providing location and holdings information.

Fiscal constraints prevented LC from expanding its automation efforts to support CONSER II. Late in 1977, OCLC agreed to accept the managerial responsibility that had previously been CLR's and to continue its operational responsibility for the project. Although CLR had negotiated a contract with OCLC for CONSER I database operations, no new agreement was established when OCLC took over CLR's management role. In effect, OCLC and other CONSER principals continued to observe the terms of the contract even though it was no longer in force.

No formal agreement had previously been established for dividing decision-making authority among OCLC, the Centers of Responsibility, the ISDS National Centers, CONSER participants, and other interested groups. This informal process did not cause friction nor inhibit the project's growth. After the managerial change-over, the division of responsibility remained implicit.

There were two committees of participants: an Operational Staff Group, composed -- as the name suggests -- of persons in each participant library who carried out day-to-day operations, and a Participants Group, composed of representatives having managerial responsibility in each participating library. There

was also an Advisory Group, composed of representatives from major organizations that were perceived to have a stake in CONSER.

Of the three groups, the Participants Group held primary managerial authority. In a memorandum of October 16, 1980, Frederick G. Kilgour, then OCLC President, discussed the "governance" section of an ARL report on the project. The report raised the concern implicit in the Steering Committee's decision that OCLC should be an "interim" operator of the database, stating that managerial responsibility for the database should not rest with any one utility. In response, Mr. Kilgour asserted that responsibility rested not solely with OCLC, but also with the CONSER participants (including LC and NLC). He said OCLC served primarily as a facilitator and a manager, and not as the primary decision maker within the project.[7]

In July 1978, at its first meeting subsequent to the management change-over, Mr. Kilgour gave the Participants Group further information on his view of the group's role and that of OCLC. The participants would have responsibility for day-to-day cataloging decisions. OCLC's role would include such functions as calling meetings of the Participants and Advisory Groups, acting as communications center for the project, and providing statistical and management reports.

Although OCLC thus provided some clarification on its view of matters of governance, at the time of OCLC managerial change-over these matters were for the most part undocumented. It appeared that the Centers of Responsibility, LC and NLC, retained final responsibility for decisions on bibliographic conventions. OCLC retained responsibility for database operations. NLC, LC, and OCLC shared responsibility for establishing general policies and procedures and were advised in this area by the Participants Group. The Participants Group made routine cataloging decisions. The Operational Staff Group acted on a procedural -- as opposed to a policy -- level, and acted largely as a discussion group having as its main function the sharing of information, problems, and tactics for problem solving.

The purpose of the Advisory Group remained unclear. At its first meeting following the transition, the Participants Group discussed this matter and reached no agreement. The participants decided nonetheless that, whatever its purpose, the Advisory Group should continue to exist. In a brochure describing CONSER, OCLC later stated that the group existed to counsel CONSER participants on policy matters, review the progress of the Project, and inform constituents about the Project.[8]

Along with the National Library of Canada and the ISDS National Centers, the Library of Congress would continue to be responsible for the bibliographic quality of the database. Adherence to working conventions would continue to be a requirement for all participants; any changes to those conventions would be developed by the Library of Congress in consultation with CONSER participants and OCLC.

At this first post-transition meeting the Participants Group formally agreed that the work of CONSER had not been completed and that the project should continue indefinitely.

Also at this meeting, a subcommittee was appointed to draft a goals and objectives statement for the project. Appointed to the subcommittee were Mary Sauer (now Mary S. Price) of LC, Mary Ellen Jacob of OCLC, Ryburn Ross of Cornell, and Mr. Anable.

In May 1979, this statement was presented to the Advisory Group. It contained a single goal and six objectives:

Goal: to continue to enlarge and improve a core database of bibliographic information on serial titles available for use on the international, national, regional, and local levels.

Objectives:

1. To provide a reliable and authoritative serials database to meet the needs of library patrons, other users of information, and the developing national and international bibliographic networks.

2. To assist the national libraries of both Canada and the United States in the establishment and maintenance of a machine-readable serials database.

3. To support the interface of national serials database activities with the programs of international serials systems -- including the participation of the National Serials Data Program (NSDP) and ISDS/Canada in the International Serials Data System (ISDS).

4. To support local, regional, national, and international serial union list activities.

5. To ensure the use of nationally and internationally accepted standards, rules, and conventions for building and maintaining serials bibliographic records.

6. To identify deficiencies in the database, such as subject, language, and retrospective coverage, and to implement appropriate remedies.

By June 1979, five new participants had jointed CONSER: The Florida Union List of Serials (University of Florida), Boston Theological Institute, Harvard University, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Indiana University. During the following year, five more joined: the Universities of Washington, Texas, Michigan, and California-Los Angeles, as well as the Government Printing Office. In August 1980 ULAP withdrew from membership, and in 1983 the University of Pittsburgh joined, completing CONSER's current membership.

By April 1980, the CONSER database contained 250,000 titles, including 90,000 authenticated by either LC or NLC.

In 1980, the ARL Task Force on Bibliographic Control conducted a review of CONSER, identifying four areas in which there were issues to be resolved and giving recommendations regarding them.[9] These were:

Issue: The CONSER database is not accessible online to all libraries. Recommendations: endorse a resolution adopted by the Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries at their meeting on June 27, 1980, and support efforts at interim solutions for sharing data. The Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries is a discussion group within ALA's Resources and Technical Services Division. The group's resolution encouraged libraries and the bibliographic utilities to work toward establishment of (a) an electronic interconnection between the utilities, (b) more timely distribution of CONSER records, and (c) establishment of a carefully monitored quality assurance program.

Issue: The rate of authentication of CONSER records is too low and the backlog of unauthenticated records too high. Recommendations: increase CONSER participation (regardless of utility affiliation) and support an LC plan to decentralize authentication.

Issue: Projects for retrospective conversion of records for serials are not all following the same standards. Recommendation: CONSER standards should be adopted for all retrospective conversion projects.

Issue: Managerial responsibility for a project, such as CONSER, which is North American in scope, should not rest with any one bibliographic utility. Recommendation: none. (Note: the Kilgour memorandum of October 16, 1980, addressed this concern.)

The second half of CONSER's first decade can be characterized by the increased use of the database for other projects. The decisions to make CONSER the database of choice for these projects are a mark of achievement and a measure of success for the CONSER effort as well as a commitment for it to continue.

A major cooperative effort was begun in 1978 between the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the National Serials Data Program (NSDP) to implement mandatory printing of the ISSN on serials mailed at special rates through the United States mail. NSDP successfully persuaded the USPS to use the ISSN (if assigned) for serials mailed at second-class or controlled circulation rates as its authorized identification number for revenue collection and address collection purposes. For those serials without an ISSN, a USPS number would be required.

CONSER helped the USPS/NSDP project in two ways. First, the CONSER database is the comprehensive, reliable source for NSDP's ISSN registrations. Initial matching of the NSDP and USPS files was impossible since there were no element common to both files. To solve this dilemma, the USPS numbers were entered in a local control field of CONSER database records authenticated by NSDP that contained the ISSN to be reported to USPS. At the end of the project, the USPS received a magnetic tape of the database records with ISSN and USPS numbers to machine-load into its internal files.

Second, NSDP asked CONSER participants for assistance on the project to help build the file on CONSER. A grant from the Council on Library Resources allowed the Library of Congress to contract with three of the CONSER participants to aid NSDP in the project. Their role was to add records and/or the USPS field to existing records and to send letters to publishers to obtain surrogates for NSDP to assign the ISSN for those titles.

In 1981, New Serials Titles (NST) began to be produced from the MARC-Serials file. Holdings location information was added to the 850 field in CONSER records by NST staff as reports were received from its participating libraries. Later, CONSER NST participants began to report their holdings online. The nature of the publication changed as fuller records were included and only the institution location information could be provided. The size of the publication increased dramatically as MARC-Serials records were re-distributed. Measures were introduced in 1983 to use a subfield code in the 012 tag for NST to specify the date of inclusion of a report in its publications to help control the size and production of the NST volumes.

Also in the early 1980's, the Library of Congress investigated minimal serials cataloging for some of its materials. In keeping with LC's efforts to distribute its cataloging information, LC determined that the best means to make the minimal serials cataloging information available would be to use the CONSER database and send the records through the MARC-Serials distribution process. Although concern was expressed by CONSER and OCLC participants about the possible problems the minimal level serials could cause in the database, it was generally agreed that until the work began it would be difficult to measure the impact.

OCLC made use of the CONSER database to support its serials subsystems functions. Most importantly, the OCLC Union Listing component became available in November 1980 and increased use was made of CONSER bibliographic records as a result of the numerous union list groups that developed across the country. Also, as holdings were added and records were converted for each union list member, quality control questions and bibliographic inconsistencies were brought to the attention of the CONSER participants by OCLC's quality control section staff. The union list projects acted to increase the bibliographic consistency of the database, especially when printed products began to be derived from it. An original CONSER objective was to support union list creation and the use of the database by OCLC and its participating libraries is a demonstration that the objective has been achieved to some degree.

Newspapers also became an important part of the CONSER database in the 1980's. The National Endowment for the Humanities began funding a program to enable states and territories to inventory and achieve bibliographic control for their newspaper holdings. The purpose of the program was to facilitate the sharing of a national resource -- the newspaper. The U.S. Newspaper Program participants were designated partial CONSER participants and began to catalog and input records in 1983. Holding location information is included in the OCLC Union List subsystem. The bibliographic records are included in the CONSER database and are distributed by the Library of Congress through through the MARC-Serials tapes. The goal is to inventory and catalog 300,000 newspaper titles published in North America since 1690.

The CONSER Abstracting and Indexing (A&I) Coverage Project began operation in 1983. The purpose of this project was to add title coverage information to records in the CONSER database to identify where serials were indexed and abstracted. The project was jointly sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services. This project would provide a needed link between A&I service citations and library catalogs. Eighty-five A&I services agreed to participate in the project and provided lists of their title coverage information to the project. These lists were searched against records in the CONSER/OCLC database and a 510 field specifying the index name was added to matching serial titles.

Benefits from the CONSER A&I Project were expected for many groups (e.g., researchers, reference librarians, A&I services), but there has been significant benefit to CONSER from the project as well. Since abstracting and indexing services cover the more important serial publications, the re-assessment and review of all of these titles has taken place as the project staff checked to see that the titles have ISSN and key titles assigned to them (a project objective). Both the ISDS/Canada and NSDP have had an opportunity to review ISDS assignments for their imprints.

Project records will be authenticated and distributed through MARC-Serials. Many of the A&I covered titles were part of the base file and some of the records had not yet been authenticated due to the backlog at the Library of Congress. The project provided a means to move these records into a higher priority for authentication.

The A&I Project also identified titles not yet in the CONSER database. The number was relatively small and confirms the success of CONSER's cooperative database building effort. However, the identified titles are also in specific subject areas (e.g., art, architecture, and business) pointing to possible gaps in the database that need to be examined.

Another A&I Project benefit to CONSER is the developing maintenance program for the A&I services to continue to provide title coverage information to NSDP and the National Library of Canada. Since A&I services try to keep current with the titles they cover, they will be providing information to CONSER about new publications and title changes.

In addition to these special projects based on the CONSER database, major operational changes were made during the 1980's.

The Library of Congress introduced NACO, the Name Authority Cooperative, and some CONSER participants were among the first members. The creation of the associated authority records for serial bibliographic records was of concern to the early CONSER Steering Committee. They wisely decided at that time to go ahead with CONSER without waiting for name authorities and to use the Centers of Responsibility review process as a means to ensure that the name authority work was completed. NACO developed as a result of some of the early Steering Committee work. In the 1980's, there was an increase in NACO participation by CONSER participants and a transfer of the NACO review for serials to the Serial Record Division at the Library of Congress.

Upon authentication by a Center of Responsibility, the CONSER record would be locked against further modifications. Changes to records required the use of paper forms and associated documentation. The dynamic nature of serial publications and the number of changes necessary to the bibliographic file made the paper report forms unwieldy and barred CONSER participants from making record modifications quickly. The seeming lack of responsiveness to changes was criticized by OCLC users and in some critical articles about the quality of records in the database.

The only solution was to unlock the records and rely on a practice of "responsible parties" (a phrase used during the the Operational Staff Meeting, September 1982, and recorded in the minutes) whereby CONSER participants can make modifications to any fields that are not considered authoritative. Examples of authoritative fields are those fields that are control fields

for a specific purpose (e.g., 010 - LC card number or 022 - ISSN). NSDP records were the first to be unlocked.

With some of the participants supplying authority records for NACO and the process for unlocking records completed, the way was paved for self-authentication. Since the backlog of surrogates and records awaiting authentication at the Library of Congress was large, the decision was made to pursue self-authentication as a means to move records more quickly through the data certification as well as distribution process. Detailed procedures were developed by LC and self-authenticating participants would have their records monitored by LC. Some participants became self-authenticating in 1984.

The Library of Congress committed itself to preparing a new Editing Guide to document the various changes that had occurred since the publication of the MARC Serials Editing Guide, Second CONSER Edition. CONSER participants, especially at the Operational Staff level, expressed a need for good quality, comprehensive documentation and LC, as the institution with major responsibility for bibliographic quality made the commitment to provide it. Work has been on-going and a new Editing Guide is currently expected to be completed in 1986.

In September 1983, OCLC installed a Merge Holdings capability in its system. This feature allows OCLC's quality control staff to delete records and transfer all holdings to a retained record. The OCLC system previously did not allow records to be deleted from the database until all holdings were removed and the procedures to ask libraries with holdings on records identified for deletion was a cumbersome paper one. The installation allowed OCLC staff to begin to process a large backlog of duplicate records. The records identified for deletion had come from reports from CONSER participants. The effect of removal of the duplicates was an increase in searching efficiency and consolidation of holdings information for those libraries using OCLC records for interlibrary loan queries.

The operational changes, coupled with increased use of the CONSER database and its associated records, have been the hallmarks of CONSER's recent past and demonstrate the established role CONSER plays for bibliographic control of serials.

II

DEVELOPMENTS LEADING TO THIS STUDY

The CONSER project became operational in 1975. The original concept, developed by the Ad Hoc Committee, to build cooperatively a database of serial records, is now over twelve years old. The goal of converting 200,000 records has been surpassed; the CONSER database now has over 550,000 records, although many of these have not yet been authenticated.

As projected, the development of CONSER has created a large base file of bibliographic records. Serial titles are cataloged and entered into the OCLC database. Further use of a record usually requires no original cataloging, but rather modification for local needs, thus partially fulfilling an primary objective to reduce redundant and costly conversion efforts. Titles are cataloged following common guidelines, and participants share responsibility for maintaining the accuracy of the records that reside in the database. Policy and technical decisions made in support of CONSER are documented and made available, not just to participants, but to the library community in general. CONSER records are available online through the OCLC System and offline through the Library of Congress MARC Distribution Service.

Early CONSER emphasis was on the creation of new records for serials and of a database to be used for creators and maintainers of union lists. Originally, CONSER was to have been operational at all levels -- local, regional, national, and international -- as a source of authoritative bibliographic information and as a base file for maintaining machine-readable serials files. It has performed all these functions and more.

Although new records must always be added, the basic task of building a database has been accomplished and in consequence increased attention is now given to maintaining CONSER records.

This job is no small task. Records need modification (at the very least to add ending dates to those serials that have ceased). A new set of cataloging rules (AACR2) has been adopted and participants now have to deal with early-entered CONSER records created under earlier cataloging codes. Because a very large number of inconsistent records already exist in the database, the addition of AACR2 records has augmented an already-difficult consistency problem.

There is also a current trend toward increased online activity. Despite the online-entry nature of the project, the authentication process was, until recently, one of much paper-shuffling. Participants supplied surrogates to the Library of Congress and National Library of Canada to be used in the verification of the cataloging and the data elements entered online. Now, some participants authenticate their own records.

Before, participants also sent paper forms and surrogates to the Centers of Responsibility when requesting modifications to authenticated records. Now, many of those modifications can be made online to already-authenticated records. Before, New Serial Titles (NST) participants sent printed catalog cards to NST to report their holdings. Now these participants can report to New Serial Titles online.

CONSER participants have been encouraged to join NACO, LC's Name Authority Cooperative Project, and some have done so. The establishment of online authority control was an original objective of CONSER's planners, and creation of shared authority records is a direct outgrowth of the success of the CONSER project.

Over the years, CONSER has been used to provide a mechanism for related activities, such as the United States Postal Service project for NSDP, the U.S. Newspaper Program, and the CONSER Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project.

In addition, since the late 1970's, many institutions have included references to CONSER in applying for serials conversion grants to the National Endowment for the Humanities and under Title II-C of the Higher Education Act --Strengthening Research Library Resources. These references have included in particular the standards set for the project.

Despite considerable achievements, there are many opportunities for improvement. As expressed in the LC work statement for this study, questions facing CONSER's participants and coordinators include the following: What aspects of CONSER should be strengthened or expanded, eliminated, or left as they are? Are there appropriate new initiatives and directions to be taken? Should new members be solicited and, if so, how? Are there roles for publishers, producers of abstracting and indexing services, and subscription agencies? What organizations ought to have responsibility for CONSER operations and decision making, and how can operations and decisions be handled most effectively?

Other topics needing to be addressed are as follows: standards, including the implications and opportunities afforded by the Linked Systems Project; the relationship of the MARC Format for Holdings and Locations and its implementation to CONSER; quality control; communication among participants, including shared information on cataloging priorities; online maintenance and record enhancement; statistics; and distribution of records.

CONSER I was completed, but CONSER II did not materialize. What are the consequences of failing to implement CONSER II? How many of the plans included in CONSER II are being realized? What has been the impact of a lack of a defined plan of action for CONSER? What has become of the four issues raised in the 1980 ARL study?

What else remains to be done? What should the future hold for CONSER?

III

METHOD OF STUDY

A. General

The goals for the study were set out in the work statement from the Library of Congress (Appendix A). This work statement provides some background on the CONSER project, identifies the tasks to be performed by the contractors, lists the materials to be supplied by LC to the contractors, and gives the direction and method of reporting.

The method of study for the project was determined in early June 1985. Published and unpublished records, reports, and analyses were reviewed. Comments and recommendations were invited from interested parties at large. The primary method was interviews with participants, critics, current and potential stake-holders and beneficiaries, and other interested parties.

Two meetings were held in June in which the contractors and LC staff members determined whether the above methods were acceptable. Other purposes of the meetings were to clarify the intent of the study and to identify the issues that the Library felt must be addressed. Further meetings were held with LC staff during the course of the study to discuss findings and their presentation in this report. The LC CONSER Coordinator reviewed drafts of the report during the final phases of the study.

Although they originally expected the study to conclude at the end of September, the contractors found that it required more time. They therefore sought and obtained an extension from LC.

B. Literature Search

A search of the literature revealed that much of the material written about CONSER appeared in the first five years of the project's existence. Included in the bibliography (Appendix B) are the most significant articles on CONSER. In recent years, references to CONSER have been just that -- references. The only significant article or analysis of the project appearing in recent years was a paper prepared by Barrie Burns of the National Library of Canada in 1982.

The search also revealed that unpublished materials were likely to give useful information only about the early stages of the project's development.

C. Cost Survey

At one point in planning the study, it was thought that a survey could be done to gather information on the costs of participating in CONSER. As early interviews were conducted, it became apparent that, for most institutions, CONSER costs are an integral part of their serials cataloging process. The contractors decided that it would be difficult to gather any meaningful figures for this study and that a survey should therefore not be conducted. Costs, however, are of interest and concern to all participants and are addressed in the findings below.

D. Solicitation of Comments

In early July, the contractors attended the annual conference of the American Library Association. Information about the CONSER study was presented to many ALA committees and a handout (see Appendix C) was given to any individuals who wished further information about the study. The contractors were also available in the LC Information Suite one morning to answer any questions or respond to comments about the study.

The primary purpose of this activity was to identify individuals who wished to be interviewed and/or were willing to comment on the CONSER project. As another means for soliciting information from the community at large, a notice was prepared for the Association of Research Libraries Newsletter (Appendix D).

These activities, as well as the participants meeting and the interviews discussed below, resulted in the receipt of a number of letters from participants and other interested parties.

E. CONSER Participants Meeting

On June 18th, a meeting was held with the CONSER Participants at OCLC Headquarters in Dublin, Ohio. At that meeting, one of the contractors was introduced to the group. Discussion was unstructured; a main focus was changes that could and should be effected in CONSER. Minutes of this meeting are given in Appendix E.

F. Interviews

The primary method of investigation, the interviews, began in mid-July and continued into November. Contact with individuals was usually made by telephone. Conversations lasted from fifteen minutes to over an hour and a half. Some in-person interviews were conducted, most with Library of Congress staff and individuals located in the Washington, D.C., area.

Current CONSER participants were the first group of individuals to be contacted. Others interviewed included the members of the CONSER Advisory Group and the CONSER Operational Staff Group. In addition to current members of the groups, some former members were contacted for their perspectives on the project. Library of Congress and National Library of Canada staff members were interviewed, as well as appropriate staff from the bibliographic utilities. Identifiable critics and proponents of the project were contacted and an effort was made to reach other individuals who are knowledgeable about cooperative cataloging and database development.

Individuals in institutions that had expressed an interest in participating in CONSER were telephoned and some associated national project participants using the CONSER database, such as the Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project and the National Newspaper Program, were also approached for interviews. A list of the persons interviewed appears in Appendix F.

(Note: Additional comments about the study were received either verbally or in the mail by the contractors. Although the individuals offering the comments were not fully "interviewed," their comments were noted and have been incorporated into this study. The list in Appendix F also includes the names of these individuals.)

The basic interview format was structured around four questions that addressed all of the topics included in the Library of Congress work statement. The questions were:

1. What is CONSER, i.e., what is the CONSER Project and database and what objectives should be set for it?

2. Who is CONSER, i.e., who should be included in the CONSER project?

3. How should CONSER be done, i.e., what methods should be employed to achieve the CONSER objectives?

4. Where should the management and governance for CONSER be located, i.e., which organizations should be in control of CONSER?

The section that follows summarizes findings from the literature search as well as information received in letters and comments made both by CONSER participants in their June meeting and by persons who were interviewed. Duplication -- occasioned by the fact that the participants spoke in their June meeting and were subsequently interviewed -- has been avoided by presenting recommendations from the CONSER meeting only where they differ from, or add to, those of other individuals.

IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION OF ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: because neither "interviewee" nor "respondent" is a particularly satisfactory term, in this section the term "informant "is used to represent individuals who were consulted. Although informant is not entirely free of negative connotations (it sounds something like "informer"), it is less jarring than the alternatives. The term is used to describe all those who contributed to this study. The term "participants" is used in its common-sense meaning to denote the subset of informants composed of persons from institutions that participate in CONSER.

As well as findings, this section gives a discussion and one or more recommendations for each issue. For clarity and ease of reference, each recommendation is identified by the letter of the section in which it appears as well as a sequential number within section (the first recommendation is thus "A1"). A complete list of the recommendations appears as Appendix G.

A. Overall Findings

As already noted, CONSER has achieved many of the objectives that its original planners and later studies have set for it.

CONSER, as it is, works, works quite well, and has not outlived its usefulness. There is a wide consensus of opinion that the project should be continued. Most informants are reluctant to overhaul the project systematically. They favor changes that will improve the project through evolutionary growth, but not fundamentally change it.

Discussion

Although many have been achieved, some of the objectives set for CONSER have not. In addition, as the LC work statement makes clear, there are numerous opportunities for improvement. Although other means might be created for achieving these ends, no better program exists, has been proposed, or can reasonably be established.

Recommendation

A1. CONSER needs to continue. It is a valuable project having many existing and potential uses. It should adopt a policy of evolutionary change.

B. CONSER Name

Many informants suggested that the name be changed from the CONSER Project to the CONSER Program. Others suggested that CONSER be changed from CONversion of SERials to some other name.

Discussion

The name was coined by the project's originators in its earliest stages of development. Though no longer literally accurate, it is well-established. Preserving it would underscore the evolutionary aspect of current developments: the continuity between CONSER as it has been and as it is becoming.

Recommendation

B1. Continue to use the name "CONSER" to describe this cooperative activity and continue to use "project." These terms emphasize the existence of a specific plan for engaging in a large undertaking and suggest the intention to communicate with and involve non-participants.

C. CONSER Definition

The attitudes of persons interviewed, for the most part, reflected their institutional and organizational positions. The individuals contacted either felt ambivalent towards CONSER or carried very strong opinions about what it is and should be. There were some interesting and revealing comments. These opinions were as diverse as the number of individuals talked to. No response could be predicted, but a general perception of how a person felt about CONSER could be gleaned from the initial questions regarding the definition of the project.

The first question usually asked of the informants was, what do you consider CONSER to be, what is your definition of CONSER? Most of the responses would begin with, "the official definition is ... " and then augment that definition with their own words. The combined, representative, "official" definition is:

A cooperative project to build a machine-readable database of authoritative bibliographic information for serials.

Augmentations and variations on the definition of CONSER include:

A project to catalog all possible serials.
A serials conversion project.
A cooperative association of libraries that upgrade and maintain serial records in the OCLC database.
A source of good information on periodicals.
A national resource database for serials.
A cooperative serials cataloging database.
A national and international serials database.

A database or fairly complete serials records received and used in the U.S.
A core group of libraries and other institutions attempting to build a high-quality database of serials records.
A cooperative project of libraries around the country and LC actively trying to upgrade and maintain serials records.
A consortium, spearheaded by LC, for the authentication and standardization of serials cataloging as well as tagging and editing.

The definitions given were usually descriptions of activities and abilities, not of the organizational structure. Terms chosen to describe CONSER that did refer to structure included such revealing words as cooperative association, consortium, and voluntary participation.

Discussion

The variety of responses given in answer to the question What is CONSER? should not be of major concern. The "official" definition is both accurate and universally accepted. Any cooperative program that remains vibrant and active ten years after its founding is certain to be viewed in numerous ways. CONSER is all that it is thought to be and perhaps more. The absence of varying views would be a concern; their presence is not.

CONSER is adequately defined. The brochure produced by OCLC is a useful introduction to the project.

Recommendation

C1. CONSER should be defined as a cooperative program to build and maintain a machine-readable database of authoritative bibliographic information for serials. This definition, including augmentations and variations, should continue to be used for CONSER. Encouraging a broadly based definition also fosters broadly-based thinking on the goals and objectives of CONSER.

D. Goals and Objectives of CONSER

The literature search produced abundant information on goals and objectives. These are given in the section headed History of the CONSER Project. See Appendix H for a summary.

Many informants thought that most of the "original goals" for the CONSER project had been met. Others, however, said that CONSER had not gone far enough to realize its goals or objectives. It may be that the goals for the project have not been well-articulated in recent years. It also may be that the impetus for continuing the project should be to continue to work towards goals already stated.

Discussion

One goal clearly has been accomplished: to convert 200,000 serial records from either manual or machine-based files into a common machine-readable database. This achievement is a major one and should be recognized widely as such.

The literature and interviews show that much has been accomplished and much remains to be done. Current opportunities for improvement suggest the need for establishing new goals and objectives as well as giving a thorough review to past ones.

The literature and interviews also make clear that CONSER is accepted and admired by the library community and by serials specialists, but beyond participants and certain other stake-holders, there is little current awareness of the project's achievements, activities, and pattern of development. One of CONSER's shortcomings has been a failure to publicize widely its recent achievements.

NACO, Linked Systems, distributed processing, and other developments in library automation receive and deserve widespread attention. CONSER, which predated and largely prefigured them, should receive due notice, of course. More than that, its continuing value and potential deserves full recognition.

Recommendations

D1. CONSER's mission, its goals, and its objectives need to be reviewed. CONSER's tenth anniversary is an opportune time for creating and implementing a strategic plan of action embodying a revised and updated mission, goals, and objectives. Current opportunities for improvement should be recognized and a new mission, goals, and objectives set as required to take advantage of these opportunities. This is a good time to give the project a new impetus.

D2. In order to assist CONSER in the strategic planning effort, a preliminary structure has been developed and is included as Appendix I. Many of the recommendations made in this study are incorporated into the structure along with suggestions for responsibilities and schedules. Therefore, throughout the rest of this section, recommendations will generally refer to CONSER and to specific organizations or groups within CONSER only when appropriate. Strategic planning is a process, and the intent of providing the framework is to promote the active involvement of all of CONSER's stake-holders.

D3. In conjunction with this process of review, re-statement, and planning, the project should establish means for publicizing what it has done and has yet to do. In part, this should be done by wide involvement of librarians and other stake-holders in the process; in part, it should be accomplished through a concerted public relations effort.

E. CONSER Database

The contractors asked what is the CONSER database? Who uses it? How is it used? How should the CONSER database be structured? Should it be centralized or decentralized?

None of the above questions were really answered by the literature search, CONSER meeting, or interviews. In fact, the more responses were provided, the more questions were raised. Perceptions of the database are dependent upon the functions for which it is to be used.

The most commonly cited function is that of providing authoritative bibliographic information about serial publications held in CONSER libraries. Among informants, those with a cataloging background tended to make stronger reference to the use of the terms "authoritative" and "bibliographic" than those not as closely associated with cataloging. Other terms and phrases given as descriptors for the CONSER database were:

Machine-readable database.
Online serials database.
File of records containing information about serial publications.
Well-maintained database.
Resource database.

The literature includes references to a multiplicity of uses of the CONSER database. These include ordering, cataloging, check-in and other serials operations, as well as providing information needed for interlibrary loans, unions lists and bibliographies. Informants added that CONSER records (or the serial records in the OCLC database) are used to verify citations and as a collection development tool. The CONSER database also recently has been used as a vehicle to support the U.S. National Newspaper Program and the CONSER Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project.

Looking towards the future, informants cited more and better records as a way to improve CONSER. In the past, CONSER was "thankful for what we could get" and was grateful when the first institutions agreed to participate. Participants, during the interviews, often could identify a particular area in the database that was incomplete. Foreign language serials, and subject areas of law, clinical health, and music were just a few of the categories cited. Expansion of the database, especially for some subject, geographic, and language areas is important for the continued use of the CONSER database.

Discussion

Although one of CONSER's primary original objectives was to alleviate the inconsistency that existed among the serials files in development in the early 1970's, circumstances (mainly

limited resources and the fairly recent implementation of AACR2) have prevented this objective from being fully achieved. While recognizing inconsistency as a continuing problem, informants acknowledge that there would be much less consistency among serials files had CONSER not existed.

The development of working conventions for CONSER was an outgrowth of the realization that serials were often treated differently within institutions. Published tools, such as the Union list of Serials and NST, achieved their consistency through editorial control. Authentication by the Centers of Responsibility was employed for editorial control, but authentication has not kept pace with the growth of the database and the backlog of surrogates is uncomfortably large.

A problem not faced in the literature and not much discussed by informants is that the CONSER database does not exist as a separate entity. The transfer of the database to LC could have eliminated this problem. As things stand, the database is part of the OCLC online system; problems with consistency are exacerbated by the existence of serial records entered by OCLC member libraries. Other OCLC users and even CONSER participants at times find it difficult to distinguish CONSER records from other database records. In addition to modifying their own records, CONSER participants are, to a great extent, responsible for the upgrading and verification of OCLC serials records.

This is, of course, an advantage to CONSER participants as well as a cause of confusion among OCLC libraries. CONSER participants have the use of records contributed to OCLC by non-CONSER libraries. This advantage is mitigated somewhat, however, because, as nearly all current participants will testify, it is often more difficult to correct or justify existing data in a record than to create a new record from scratch. These comments may seem contradictory to the fundamental objective of CONSER to cooperatively build a database, but they highlight how difficult the objective is to achieve. An increase in publicity about CONSER's accomplishments and explanations of how the database has been built can alleviate much of the concern and confusion expressed by users of the CONSER database.

Further causes of confusion result from two matters that concern LC: first, the set of CONSER records that LC distributes in tape form and that NLC distributes on microfiche and tape differs from the CONSER records in the OCLC database; and second, because LC uses the CONSER database as its own serials catalog, it requires CONSER participants to observe conventions that are important to LC but not to the participants and that would probably not be required in a shared cataloging system which was not also an internal LC catalog. These problems are discussed in following sections.

One of the motivations for this study was a question of use of the CONSER database. Findings indicate that indeed the CONSER database is used widely in the library community. There is, however, an opportunity for further research into the uses of CONSER. The study gleaned few specifics about how CONSER is used by the non-serial information community. It was suggested that user access had not been improved. A more comprehensive exploration into how CONSER records (i.e., serial records) could be of use to the information community would be valuable.

If the CONSER database is to remain a resource database, its expansion should be a priority. Nearly all of the participants identified gaps in the file. Especially emphasized were the gaps in foreign language serials, highlighting an overall concern about the lack of language specialists in serials cataloging. An observation or speculation from some of the informants was that there were records for these areas existing in other databases (specifically RLIN). If, in fact, the gaps would be filled if the CONSER database were mapped with other files, there would be an increased impetus for pursuing linkage to those files. This issue is discussed more fully in later sections of this study.

Recommendations

E1. The CONSER database is an international resource and its participants must continue to build and maintain it.

E2. To identify current and potential products and services, CONSER should more intensively investigate how the database is used by the information community and incorporate the results of this investigation into its planning and public relations program.

E3. CONSER should undertake a systematic review of the current database to identify gaps. Included in the review should be an examination of the content of serials files not yet in CONSER and of the possibility of merging them with the CONSER database. Upon completion of the investigation appropriate remedies should be implemented to reduce the gaps. Priorities for these remedies should be established and member institutions who could fill gaps should be actively encouraged to participate in CONSER.

E4. CONSER should continue to develop and articulate its policies regarding database inconsistency. It should create a clear statement to explain the reasons why inconsistencies developed (such as changes in cataloging rules) and set forth procedures both for removing existing inconsistencies and for preventing new occurrences. The statement should set out the project's level of tolerance for inconsistencies among records, its priorities for dealing with them, and its plan for effecting these priorities. In addition, it should describe concisely, in terms readily understood by serials catalogers and other users of serial records, the different types of inconsistent serial records and should give guidance on coping with these inconsistencies.

F. CONSER Record

Questions concerning the CONSER database lead inevitably to questions concerning the records of which it is composed.

The literature shows four categories of CONSER records: authenticated records; records input online to OCLC by CONSER participants, but not yet authenticated by a Center of Responsibility; records batch-loaded into OCLC by CONSER participants, but not yet upgraded to CONSER standards (or, of course, authenticated); and records of CONSER participants that have not yet been entered into OCLC.

Informants recognized an additional four types of records appearing in the OCLC database and used by CONSER participants:

1. Records self-authenticated by CONSER participants.

2. OCLC Level I records input by users that are not CONSER participants.

3. Minimal level records input by NST, the CONSER A&I Project, or LC that are authenticated for distribution.

4. Incomplete records input by any OCLC user, not yet updated by a CONSER participant or authenticated by LC or NLC.

Informants' definitions of CONSER records varied widely, but were predictable in light of their responses to the question, what is the CONSER database?

To informants, a CONSER record can be:

Any record that a CONSER participant has created or input, modified, or claimed.
Records authenticated by the Library of Congress.
Authenticated records distributed through the MARC distribution service.
Any serial record in the OCLC database with a CONSER symbol in the MARC field 040.
Only modified records in the OCLC database with a CONSER participant symbol in the 040 field.

Some informants pointed out that the online CONSER records are different from those distributed on MARC-Serials tapes. Authenticated records are distributed by the Library of Congress on these tapes. Descriptions of "CONSER" records differed between interview informants who use online records and those who receive MARC-Serials distributed records.

The methods of distributing CONSER records are generally not clear to the library community. In fact, the processing of

records within the automated systems operations at the Library of Congress have sometimes been unclear even to LC staff. Current participants, even those associated with self-authentication, are uncertain about the way records move through the LC process.

Consistency was also a commonly used term throughout the interview process in the discussion of the records, as it had been in the discussion of the database. Here, however, consistency among and within records was the concern. Changes in cataloging rules and changes in procedures have resulted in what some call a "mish-mash of stuff" in the database.

Another issue raised in investigating the CONSER records was that of record size. A letter received by the consultants commented on the need for the database to handle an increase in the number of variable fields for CONSER records. The need had been highlighted by the increasing number of records reaching the system limit that had been used by the CONSER A&I Coverage Project.

Discussion

The standards used to create the bibliographic records for CONSER are based, as previously stated, on a set of agreed-upon practices. Those practices govern the input of data and the upgrading, modification, supplementation, and authentication for the CONSER project. The practices encompass the following areas: composite format, minimum data element set, bibliographic conventions, and error correction procedures.

To the extent possible, the CONSER records were intended to comply with the conventions for establishing the bibliographic content of serial records, primarily those of AACR and ISDS. In addition, specific guidelines were given for over twenty different areas that were predicted to result in conflicts of interest and differences in resolution. These areas included such things as choice of entry, serial vs. monograph situations, generic terms, titles of short duration, form of heading guidelines, notes, romanization, place of publication, and linking fields.

Despite existing database inconsistencies, the significance of the agreement to abide by these conventions cannot be overstated. The ability of a group of disparate institutions to create a common database of records, to agree to abide by a certain set of rules, and to agree to interpret those rules in the same way underscores the historic nature of CONSER and of its landmark contribution to cooperative database development. No project since CONSER can claim to have the same commonality of approach.

The level of record necessary to describe a serial publication at the national level is a major issue for the CONSER project. With increasing use of online activities another look should be taken at the necessary data elements to be used in the

project. It may be that even the rules for description of serial publications will have to be modified in light of new uses of database records. CONSER might consider suggesting changes to cataloging rules to emphasize the machine-readable representation of bibliographic information for serials.

At their June meeting, CONSER Participants suggested that the project determine a minimally acceptable record for serials, keeping in mind both the many uses to which serial records are and will be put (including online user catalogs and serials control) and the variety of users who will access them (cataloging and reference librarians, serials and abstracting-indexing publishers, distributors, as well as scholars, researchers, and students). An informant later suggested that with fewer data elements, there were fewer possibilities for error.

The major discussion points concern those data elements that are to be considered local versus those that are of national use. During the conversations with informants, it became apparent that many of the questions and problems with CONSER were really a conflict between what was needed at the local level and what, as a North American program, CONSER requires. Uniformity at the local level can preclude conformity at the national level. It also became clear that there was not yet a consensus as to what was considered "nice" versus what was considered "necessary" to describe serial publications. Individual circumstances were making those determinations. As money got tighter, the national database suffered as it became everyone's own database in a conceptual sense.

The elements necessary for a CONSER record need to be described in terms both of cataloging rules and of the database or system requirements. Current cataloging rules (AACR2) specify levels for description. The Library of Congress chose to use the first level of description, but augmented that level with additional elements considered necessary to identify its serials. The National Level Bibliographic Record - Serials identifies the minimum set of data elements necessary to provide information for a publication. It describes content as well as content designation for the creation of machine-readable cataloging records for serials and specifies ten necessary MARC variable fields.

The number of data elements to include in the record is also a matter of concern since each required data element adds to the total size of the record. The CONSER A&I Coverage Project has identified over 200 records that have reached the OCLC system limit for variable fields. That number is expected to increase. The fields defined as necessary for the national record coupled with those needed locally can be constrained by system limitations. Naturally the question raised is whether the system should drive the record description or vice versa.

The current set of data elements defined for CONSER are, in fact, based on the elements included in the cataloging rules as well as those necessitated by OCLC and LC system requirements.

Any review or modification of these data elements also should include a review of associated costs and impacts for system changes. This again reflects local versus national issues for the database.

Some informants put this local versus national matter as a question of what the Library of Congress needs in its records. This comment alludes to the fact that all authenticated CONSER records reside in LC's MUMS database. Although LC cataloging policy is normally made with a view to the external environment, it is understandable that any institution makes decisions in light of its own situation. The LC local bibliographic records are the same as those found in the CONSER database on OCLC. Unlike other CONSER participants and NLC, any local editing done by LC staff remains with the master record.

An explanation of the distribution of CONSER records within this context is useful to identify additional issues for CONSER's future. Currently, CONSER records are distributed on tape through LC's Cataloging Distribution Service and through the National Library of Canada. NLC produces a microfiche edition of CONSER records (distributed in the U.S. by LC). CONSER records are available online to users of OCLC's system.

The Library of Congress Serial Record Division sections work online through the OCLC system. Any records created or modified by LC staff are included with the records from CONSER participants. These records are sent on tape back to the Library of Congress to be processed.

Authenticated CONSER records are handled and distributed differently from unauthenticated records. At a minimum, authenticated records carry two more fields than other serial records, the 010 and 042. These records are sent back to LC each week; they pass through the various components of LC's internal system and are cumulated for monthly distribution on MARC-Serials tapes. Authenticated records also reside and can be located within MUMS, LC's local system.

Tapes of unauthenticated records are also distributed, but these tapes have generally not been successfully processed. The records bypass LC's internal system and are made available as a transaction tape on a monthly service. There are few subscribers to the unauthenticated tape, yet the majority of CONSER records (defined as those that include a CONSER symbol in an 040) exist in distributed form only on that tape.

The distinction between the distribution of authenticated and unauthenticated records is of no concern to OCLC online system users since they can search and use any type of record that resides in the database.

The change in policy allowing for the authentication of CONSER records by participants is designed to increase the rate of authentication and speed distribution of records normally

caught in the authentication backlog at LC. NSDP and NST records are also authenticated by staff and distributed. An important point to emphasize here is that all authenticated records become part of LC's internal files. Therefore, LC has a need for authenticated records to be consistent with its own catalog.

Although CONSER fulfills its obligation to make records available, there have been suggestions of ways to improve the service. The distribution mechanism is an all-or-nothing service. Subsets of the file are not offered as subscription products, nor are parts of records or only changes to records. An investigation of additional distribution mechanisms should be pursued. In addition to tape distribution, an exploration can be made into other forms of distribution (e.g., CD-ROM). A further possibility is distribution in one tape service of all CONSER records (i.e., those defined as having a CONSER participant symbol in the 040), not just authenticated ones.

As changes in technology allow for more and different types of record flow, CONSER will also have to take into account the issue of downloading and uploading data. The CONSER file will retain its usefulness only if it continues to be built. As more of its participants work with local systems, CONSER should explore other ways to build, maintain, and distribute the database.

Recommendations

F1. An investigation should be made of the data elements and cataloging rule interpretations that will be needed to handle the new forms of serial publications and to serve the new uses that may be given to serial records as the process of automation accelerates. This investigation could result in a new minimum set of data elements or in a number of data element sets each applicable to a different category of serial titles (ceased publications, for example, might be given different treatment than current ones). Similarly, it could result in different sets of rule interpretations for different categories of serials.

F2. CONSER should impress upon OCLC the importance of increasing the record size capability in the online system to provide for the capacity to handle all necessary data elements and fields required for serial bibliographic records.

F3. CONSER should examine the differences between local and broader needs and divorce from its agreed-upon practices, as much as is practical, data needed locally but not in a North American or international context. The national libraries should, in particular, examine the consequences that flow from their use of CONSER records for local purposes.

F4. In conjunction with these investigations, CONSER should study the costs and impacts that system and other changes mandate. The value of each change should be considered in light of both costs and difficulty of implementation. Although CONSER

is not alone in having to respond to various system and other changes, the changing nature of serial publications themselves makes these investigations more critical.

F5. CONSER should produce and maintain a concise set of standards, policies, guidelines, and interpretations that consolidates the "agreed-upon practices".

F6. The process of record distribution should be fully explained to CONSER participants. Procedures for causing records to move through LC's internal processing should be given to the CONSER operational staff and explained in detail.

F7. The Cataloging Distribution Service should continue to provide CONSER records in machine-readable form.

F8. An investigation should be made into the possibility of consolidating the distribution of CONSER products so that all products contain the same record set. The market potential and usefulness of modifying and adding to existing distribution products should be analyzed, for example by making subsets available or products available on new media, e.g. CD-ROM.

F9. The implications of local systems development and their likely impact on CONSER should be examined. Should institutions not wish to participate in CONSER (because they have a well-developed local system) or participate through a variety of new and different means (instead of the historical mechanism of using the OCLC system), CONSER should explore those means to mitigate the potential impact or turn it to advantage.

F10. Trends in systems development other than at the local level also need to be monitored by CONSER. The immediate and long-term potential of the Linked Systems Project and of the emerging standards for Open Systems Interconnection should be investigated. Also relevant to this investigation is the distributed-processing planning already underway within the bibliographic utilities. The changing systems environment and increasing technological capabilities at all levels can provide CONSER with assistance and new mechanisms to build and maintain the database.

G1. CONSER Operations: Introduction

The section of the interview asking how CONSER can best be done evoked the most varied responses. Many of the comments seemed dependent on the backgrounds of the informants and the types of institutions they represented. The comments ranged from just leaving it alone to providing a more stringent management of the activities.

CONSER involves two basic operations: creating and editing serial records on the one hand and authenticating serial records on the other. Authentication is defined as the certification

that both data content and content designation of a record have been reviewed and that the record meets those standards and practices agreed on by the CONSER Participants. As already noted, authentication also ensures that the bibliographic record is distributed through the MARC-Serials distribution service.

LC, NLC, and their associated ISDS agencies were for many years totally responsible for the authentication of CONSER records. This was not an insignificant task for any of them, and decisions to add participants to CONSER were dependent on the ability of the authentication agencies to handle the increased work.

All CONSER participants use a special level of authorization in the OCLC system that enables them to add, change, or delete bibliographic information already found in OCLC serial records. After inputting or editing bibliographic records, CONSER participants that do not self-authenticate send surrogates to LC or NLC along with the control numbers of the records.

The records then enter LC's or NLC's workflow. If either library has earlier cataloging for a given serial, this cataloging is amalgamated into the existing bibliographic record. The record is verified and certain data elements added to both identify that the record has been authenticated and allow for its distribution. However, if there is no cataloging, the authentication must be made using the surrogate and information already in the record. In both instances, the Center of Responsibility may have to do some authority and/or subject work.

Upon authentication, prior to 1982, the record was considered to be "locked," i.e., no additional modifications could be made to the record online, and suggested changes were to be submitted via paper forms and with the appropriate documentation for proof of the changes. The authentication center was responsible for the integrity of the bibliographic information and locking protected the essential data.

In view of the variations in cataloging practices and differences in interpretation existing among libraries, it does not take much speculation to imagine the chaos that unlimited editing can cause. In fact, seemingly needless editing of CONSER records has drawn criticism in the past. The amount of editing can be seen in strings of participant symbols in the 040 field of many records. At CONSER's beginning it was logical that very few participants should be given responsibility for authenticating records. The Centers of Responsibility system resulted from this conclusion.

However, as with any funneled operation, at some point the spout cannot handle the load and either backlogs or overflows result. In particular, LC, the Center with the greatest workload, has not been able to keep up with the authentication load required of it. Its reasons are valid. Though vast in comparison to other libraries, its resources are limited and in

recent years it has been affected by increasing budget constraints. In its own serials processing, LC has a volume unsurpassed by other libraries. Complex procedures and workflows (also associated with the size of the institution) and multiple administrative units contribute to delays in processing. Authentication responsibilities usually include a great deal of name authority work, requiring considerable intellectual effort as well as time-consuming research and documentation. All of these facts contribute to delays in cataloging.

As has already been explained, to alleviate some of the load on the Library of Congress, changes were made in CONSER policies. Directly or indirectly, these were all intended to speed the flow of authenticated records.

Records created by NSDP were among the first to be unlocked to participants. This was done with the caveat, however, that the ISDS elements were to be preserved. If, according to Appendix R of the MARC Serials Editing Guide, Second CONSER Edition, changes needed to be made to the record and those changes affected ISDS elements, NSDP must be notified.

Other serial records were unlocked to allow participants to make changes in fields whose contents should be kept up to date, including frequency, cessations, and the addition of links. Modification requests for such changes were often backlogged, and OCLC users, as well as other CONSER participants, became frustrated with the inability of the Centers of Responsibility to react quickly to them.

(Often, frequency changes were made by OCLC's quality control section when they were reported by libraries participating in their Serials Control Subsystem. However, other changes made to bibliographic records were done by OCLC in consultation with the Library of Congress and National Library of Canada.)

LC began the Name Authority Cooperative (NACO) in order to share the work of creating name and series authorities for serial as well as monographic records. LC intended NACO participation to expand to include CONSER participants and this increasingly has been the case.

LC performs NACO training, and review of the name-authority records is handled either by the NACO Office or by the cataloging staff in Serial Record Division. This reduces the amount of time spent in review of the headings for existing records and obviates the need for LC staff to create associated headings for a CONSER input bibliographic record.

Currently, NACO is evolving into a fully online system. The Linked Systems Project for authority records is gradually being implemented between LC and the Research Libraries Group. Indiana University, a CONSER member, is to be the pilot OCLC library performing NACO work online with LC.

The NACO project is primarily a means by which, in sharing its authority work with other libraries, LC can continue to build its Name Authority File in times of fiscal constraint. CONSER participants and other libraries benefit from these developments in that they speed production of records that meet AACR2 (and thus CONSER) requirements for headings.

In its 1980 CONSER study, the ARL Task Force on Bibliographic Control recommended that participants be delegated authentication responsibilities. LC accepted this recommendation, and, as already discussed, some CONSER participants are now self-authenticating their records. Self-authentication involves some training at LC and it directly benefits participants by reducing the number of surrogates sent to LC for authentication. Though reviewed at LC, self-authenticated records are distributed sooner than ones authenticated by LC using surrogates.

G2. CONSER Operations: Quality Control

Quality control is a major focus of the literature on CONSER. The subject was thoroughly addressed by the project's planners, and it arose frequently in meetings of the Participants and Advisory Groups. NACO and self-authentication are largely processes by which LC shares its responsibility for quality control, and their development is now frequently mentioned in the literature.

The CONSER Record section of this report identifies specific types of records that can be found in the database. There are additional categories of records that can be identified as in need of quality control. These include, but are not limited to:

1) Duplicate records.

   a) Successive title records for which a latest title entry resides in the database.

   b) AACR2 records that duplicate records cataloged under another set of cataloging rules.

   c) Tape-loaded records that have not been removed from the database upon modification of a complete record.

2) Successively cataloged titles that now need to be collapsed due to new rule interpretations.

3) Retrospectively converted records created as special projects.

4) Incorrectly cataloged records.

At the June meeting of the CONSER Participants, matters of quality control evoked greater response than any others.

Suggestions for improvements related to quality control were as follows:

Spot check records systematically.
Expand self-authentication and NACO participation among existing CONSER participants.
Require that new members agree to self-authenticate and join NACO.
Establish means for participants to alert one another of changes they propose to make in each others' records.
Assure that the Library of Congress gives feedback when it updates and maintains records.
Establish policies with respect to third-party record creation (e.g., participants' use of other libraries or of contractors).

Informants laid similar stress on quality control. Nearly all felt that some mechanism for monitoring the quality of the database should be developed. (Unfortunately there were few volunteers to design the mechanism.) The Library of Congress was often cited as the institution best equipped to provide the final review of records, since it has been a Center of Responsibility since the inception of the CONSER project.

Currently, authentication is the quality review mechanism for the majority of the CONSER participants. Feedback is provided to the participant in the form of annotated printouts. The timing of receipt of the printouts (usually long after the record has been created) has long been an obstacle to the participants in obtaining regular information about how well they are doing.

Not surprisingly, the Library of Congress staff receives even less feedback from the "outside world" as to how well it is doing. Those who use LC/CONSER records are reluctant to contact the Library to question the quality of a record. They are much more likely to complain in-house and modify the record locally.

The larger share of the load for quality control of the CONSER database is seen by some to be carried by the quality control staff at OCLC. Requests for modifications from member libraries as well as numerous duplicate record reports prepared by CONSER participants and other libraries are regularly sent to OCLC. Although OCLC's merging of holdings symbols has greatly reduced the number of duplicate records, there is still a sizable backlog of duplicate records awaiting removal from the database.

Discussion

Most currently participating members wish to see some sort of quality control mechanism put in place. Participants have a strong desire to do right and a need to know what is right. From the operative side, however, effecting this mechanism becomes quite difficult. Part of the problem is deciding what should be considered errors. Another issue is what supporting information

is necessary in reviewing a record. Should surrogates be supplied? What should be done when it is determined that a record is bad? What kind of probation, if any, should there be for new participants? Most of the informants stated that it is hard to impose a quality control mechanism when there are no clearly defined rules for determining what errors are and which errors require correction.

Communications have been a continuing quality control concern. In August 1978 the Participants Group requested that LC and NLC draft procedures for an on-going feedback mechanism.

Recommendations

G2.1. The Library of Congress is encouraged to complete the work of authenticating the 115,000 surrogates currently on hand and should expand its role in maintaining the database. LC should systematically check CONSER records using statistically valid sampling techniques to assure database quality. LC should examine the NACO quality control program as a model for this spot-checking activity.

G2.2. OCLC should explore means, e.g. electronic mail, by which the system could alert participants of changes made to existing CONSER records. If possible this process should be an automated, or at least partially automated one.

G2.3. A similar investigation should be conducted concerning ways by which participants, particularly self-authenticating participants, can alert one another of changes they wish to make (or have made) in existing CONSER records. This system too might best operated through electronic mail.

G2.4. OCLC is encouraged to continue removing identified duplicate records from the database as well as to make appropriate changes in records identified by its member libraries.

G3. CONSER Operations: Cataloging Rules

Another issue high on the discussion list and just after quality control was, as might be expected, that of the cataloging rules. This study cannot include a debate on the relative merits of cataloging rules, but it should be noted, as already stated, that record creation is dependent on the use of rules for descriptive cataloging.

Now that most librarians are familiar with AACR2, a question often raised is whether or not all CONSER records should be converted to AACR2. The interviews brought forth mixed feelings about that topic from nearly everyone. Although the theoretical concept of having a consistent database is noble, the possibility of converting over 500,000 records is next to impossible. When asked whether or not some titles should be converted on a case-by-case or an as-used basis, most current participants indicated

they are converting online records as they modify them.

There were sound arguments both for and against converting. Those in favor of conversion were looking at the practical staff situation in which they have no catalogers who are familiar with the old rules and, with a piece in hand, a record is much easier to convert. Those against converting cited the added cost of re-cataloging just for the sake of re-cataloging.

OCLC participants, especially those with smaller collections, support the re-cataloging of a core group of titles to AACR2. This core is defined as those they use for their serials control systems and those used in the union lists since the OCLC union list product is, to a great extent, dependent upon consistency and AACR2 records.

Discussion

This issue of multiple cataloging rules is one of deja vu to CONSER as it was one of the main issues with which early CONSER had to grapple. Flexibility in the system was the only solution then and it appears to be the only solution now. Libraries will continue to face the issue of change within a historical context. Modifications and record re-creations are the norm with serials, but it is to CONSER's benefit to try to keep these to a minimum. Most informants agree that for many changes, a machine-readable record is much easier to handle than a set of 3x5 cards.

CONSER has had to live through a variety of cataloging practices -- AACR1, AACR2, last issue cataloging, first issue cataloging, splitting records, and consolidating records. The fact that it has survived these practices reflects again the importance of cooperation and agreement of purpose.

As might be expected, some informants did bring up the issue of a possible AACR3 and what CONSER might expect to do in that case. Those expecting an AACR3 hope it will really be the rules for creating catalog records in a machine-readable environment. As technology improves and as experience in using it increases, additional ways to identify materials may emerge. One suggestion was that AACR3 incorporate the relational database concept, combining the description of intellectual content with that of the various manifestations of physical format. The user perspective of cataloging remains that of identifying what is held and how to obtain it.

LC's current project to explore ways to handle the "multiple versions" problem is commendable. A set of policies and practices for improving the handling of variant formats in which a given work may appear is badly needed. This is especially so in light of the burgeoning industry of electronic publishing and new methods for the delivery of information products. The recommendation made by LC's Serial Record Division as part of this study deserves close attention. Its approach, that of creating a "primary record" and clustering with it brief

dependent records, appears to be the best one for serial records. Others that have been presented entail major shifts in current practice. They would be costly to implement and difficult to maintain.

Recommendations

G3.1. CONSER should explore a method to more systematically convert records to AACR2.

G3.2. CONSER should seek to influence positive changes for cataloging rules affecting serials and develop and effective means for responding to any cataloging rule changes.

G3.3. CONSER should monitor the work being done for LC on the "multiple versions" problem. In light of the trend towards an increase in the differing formats for delivery of serial information products, multiple versions may provide a method for handling variant formats for serials.

G4. CONSER Operations: Database Maintenance

In tandem with the discussions of quality control and cataloging rules is that concerning database maintenance. As previously stated, database and record consistency are important to CONSER's users. In addition, with the growth of local systems, problems of maintenance are compounded by the need to keep various files in sync. Matters concerning local versus national needs are discussed elsewhere. This is a maintenance issue in that consistency becomes even more difficult as participants and other CONSER database users try to keep their serials files up-to-date. Some informants specifically brought up this issue, while others only alluded to it in their responses to the quality control and consistency questions.

In particular, OCLC users (non-CONSER libraries) were quite concerned about the speed at which changes are included in CONSER authenticated records. Many of those records are the more commonly held titles and therefore are often accessed. It was suggested that a core group of titles be identified and that work on those records be given priority. Naturally the core differs depending on the size and nature of the institution (what is wanted is complete accuracy and currency for each informant's records). The interest of a stake-holder could be prima facie evidence that the serial is important and should be given priority treatment.

It was pointed out by some informants that serials subscription services are economically dependent on making record changes quickly. CONSER has not specifically addressed this economics issue, but enough has been written to support the need for early modification to OCLC database records in order to obviate redundant local modification.

A popular feature of the "old" NST was its pages of changes and and ceased publications. A criticism of the NST produced from MARC-Serials was that the feature had been lost. Some serials subscription vendors continue to supply this information in print form through newsletters or lists. The provision of a separate list of serials that had undergone some change gave those institutions with the necessary internal resources the ability to check and modify their local files.

An additional issue within this discussion is that of identifying the areas to be edited. Needless editing is of concern to users of the records. They find it difficult to determine what specific changes were made to a record with each occurrence of a symbol in the MARC field 040. One informant referred to this as a spending of dollars just to debate matters of opinion.

Discussion

Quality control is necessary not only from the input and editing standpoint, but also for maintenance. A most critical issue facing the CONSER project is that of maintenance of the database. Early CONSER goals identified a file-building effort and alluded to its maintenance, but the planners did not include statements about the estimated amount and method of maintenance necessary to keep the file timely and accurate.

There is considerable maintenance to be done on the existing file. As already discussed in the sections on the CONSER Record and CONSER Operations: Quality Control, the current OCLC database contains many different kinds of serial records. Those records are candidates for maintenance, as well as quality control.

It must again be emphasized that the CONSER project is the only means for libraries to perform online record maintenance for the serials file on the OCLC database. OCLC has given certain libraries ENHANCE status in a program for the maintenance of non-serial materials, but it relies on the CONSER participants for the maintenance of records entered in the serials format.

Maintenance questions include: what should be maintained; who should maintain it; and how should notification of changes to records be made? The dynamic nature of serial publications points to an urgent need to keep the database as current as possible in order to alleviate the burden an outdated serials file becomes to all those who use it.

There are potential problems for database maintenance in a new activity, the CONSER A&I Coverage Project. Current projections for the number of changes needed in the A&I project records are estimated to run about 10-15% (or about 12,000 transactions) per year. Of that total, slightly over one-third are expected to be new titles, another third are drops due to title cessations or policy changes, and the remaining are coverage or bibliographic record changes. These transactions

will be taking place on approximately 50,000 records.

Union list agents also estimate change rates of 10-15% per year in their lists. (These estimates are based on KNOWN or CAUGHT changes and do not include those minor changes to records not caught by serials processing departments.)

Projecting even a conservative 10% change rate on the entire CONSER file means that over 50,000 modifications will need to be made to the serials records in order to maintain the bibliographic integrity of the file. This is no small number, even if it is distributed among the current group of participants.

In order to determine the elements necessary for maintenance, the issue of what constitutes a CONSER record needs to be resolved. The elements necessary for maintenance are obviously those chosen that represent the publication's description at the national level. Optional elements can be maintained, but they will have to be handled at the expense of the institutions interested in them.

Decisions on membership for CONSER also greatly influence who will be maintaining what. If members are chosen specifically to provide certain data elements, they will need to be responsible not only for adding those data elements to a record, but also for keeping that information accurate as well.

Notification of changes to records is a sticky issue. Some participants wish to be notified any time even a minor change is made to a bibliographic record. And, as mentioned earlier, listings of changed serials are popular by-products of some systems. In cases where the changed bibliographic information affects holdings, it becomes critical that local records be modified.

Currently, modifications made to authenticated records will trigger the re-distribution of a record. In addition to worrying about the needless editing from the online viewpoint, this regular re-distribution of records should also be of concern to tape subscribers. There is no specific way in the online record to identify the change that was made and who made it, other than by the addition of an institution symbol in the 040. Those institutions receiving the record on tape do not know what specific changes were made and run the whole record through their processing routines only to discover that the change was made to a field they do not use.

OCLC union list and other participants are encouraged to review an online list of changes made to records. Information for this online list is provided by the Quality Control section in OCLC and other CONSER participants. It is not, however, universally used. (Some CONSER participants felt that identifying specific changes made to bibliographic records was an expensive additional step in their processing.)

Recommendations

G4.1. CONSER should give database maintenance as high a priority as record contribution.

G4.2. In addition to identifying the elements necessary for a record, CONSER should identify those elements that warrant editing.

G4.3. CONSER should identify the institutions responsible for maintenance of necessary data elements.

G4.4. CONSER should seek out efficient methods for making changes to records in the database. In particular, an examination should be conducted into how technology could best be used to make repetitive or block changes.

G4.5. In tandem with the recommendation on quality control, OCLC should explore a means by which the system could alert users of CONSER records to maintenance changes.

G4.6. CONSER should examine the impact of changes to the bibliographic file and the redistribution of records to subscribers. The possibilities of selective distribution of record subsets for system maintenance should be explored.

G5. CONSER Operations: NACO

The minutes of the CONSER Participants Meeting of October 24, 1980, include a section on Membership. In that section it is reported that "LC recommended, and participants agreed, that all incoming new CONSER members be required to participate in the name-authority work (shared authentication)."

Participants and most other informants agreed that library members should also be NACO members. A significant minority said that all existing and new members must be NACO libraries. It is important that authority work be done in association with the bibliographic record. If, in fact, selection of an institution is based on the nature of a subject collection and the expertise inherent in the processing of that collection, it becomes all the more important that the authority work be done along with the record creation for CONSER.

Recommendations

G5.1. All existing and new CONSER participants should be required to participate in NACO. Those that cannot join NACO should be required to give a persuasive explanation of reasons for not doing so.

G5.2. CONSER should provide non-NACO institutions with the necessary information and support that they can use as incentives for participation with their parent institutions.

G6. CONSER Operations: Self-authentication

As already noted, reasons cited for self-authentication include:

> The backlog of surrogates at the Library of Congress and LC's inability to keep up with the surrogates sent to it by CONSER participants.
>
> A means to decentralize the distribution of CONSER records.
>
> The inability of institutions to easily read or manipulate the unauthenticated CONSER tape.

Self-authentication was agreed upon as a good thing by all informants. However, even those associated with the decision for self-authentication have differing perspectives on the need for it. Some of the questions raised about self-authentication included:

> What is the real purpose for it?
> Is it just a method for record distribution?
> Should there be an increase in the codes in the 042?
> How does self-authentication relate to quality control?

Discussion

Authentication of a CONSER record serves two purposes: a certification of the data and a freeing up of the record for distribution through MARC-Serials. Self-authentication opens up an equal participation in certification and distribution.

Quality control issues related to self-authentication are of concern even to those participating in the process. In light of interest from current CONSER participants for some means of quality control, a method also must be set up to monitor the records being self-authenticated and distributed.

As the number of self-authenticated records increases, the definition of a CONSER record can be simplified to those records that are distributed through MARC-Serials. Since the intent was to authenticate and distribute all CONSER records, the emphasis on self-authentication and the changed definition would simplify the issue of what is and what is not a CONSER record.

Recommendations

G6.1. CONSER should redefine its records as those that are authenticated and distributed through MARC-Serials.

G6.2. CONSER should provide and distribute an explanation of the codes in the MARC 042 field to better describe records authenticated by its participants and Centers of Responsibility.

G6.3. CONSER should encourage all existing and new CONSER participants to self-authenticate. It should include in its membership requirements that a willingness to self-authenticate is a prerequisite of becoming a CONSER participant.

G6.4. CONSER should produce and distribute a description of self-authentication giving information on its origins, value, and purpose. It should improve the description of self-authentication that appears in the CONSER brochure.

G6.5. The Library of Congress should establish a mechanism to monitor the quality of self-authenticated records.

G7. CONSER Operations: Training

CONSER participants were given original training by LC, but there has never been an on-going training program.

Recognizing that it is difficult to impose a quality review process without incorporating a strong training program, both those present at the June participants' meeting and those later interviewed placed significant emphasis on the need for such a training program.

Participants and informants agreed that this training ideally should be done by the Library of Congress because of the expertise resident in its staff. However, they recognized that a training and quality review program would be a burden on any institution, including the Library of Congress. Whether other current participants would be willing to provide support for training and review would depend on the amount of work involved and the resources required to support it.

Discussion

The American Library Association's Resources and Technical Services Division in conjunction with the Library of Congress is planning to conduct Regional Serials Workshops beginning in the spring of 1986. These are anxiously awaited by the serials community, highlighting a need for accurate information about serials cataloging. The Library, as stated, does have the necessary expertise for this function, but it should not be the only organization to provide serials cataloging training. There is a need for more education for serials librarians, a responsibility rightfully belonging to library schools.

In addition to workshops, other methods for training can be investigated. Participants were interested in computer-assisted

training and video training programs. Some informants suggested internships.

Recommendations

G7.1. The Library of Congress should establish on-going training programs for new and existing participants.

G7.2. CONSER participants should take advantage of their resident expertise to help each other develop internal training programs for new staff.

G7.3. In addition to traditional instruction, computer-assisted and video training should be explored by CONSER, as should internships.

G8. CONSER Operations: Linked Systems Project

The desirability of establishing electronic links between bibliographic systems was recognized by CONSER's planners and the topic appears frequently in the literature. In view of this plentiful discussion, CONSER planning can be seen in some senses as a partial impetus for the Linked Systems Project now being developed.

The Linked Systems Project (LSP) is treated here as it relates directly to CONSER operations and is discussed again in a broader context in the section on System-Independence.

The foremost recommendation of the Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries, at their June 27, 1980 meeting, was that utilities establish an electronic interconnection between themselves in order to provide libraries with online access to each others' serials records. That year also saw the ARL membership endorse a statement of principals which called for linking the networks.

The goal, as stated succinctly by an individual who wrote to the contractors, is to give non-OCLC users the same advantages now enjoyed by OCLC users. Requiring double keying does not meet this goal; nor do tape input and distribution arrangements.

At their June meeting, CONSER participants saw LSP as a possible means for improving the efficiency of NACO participants that are also in CONSER, for permitting new and existing members that are not OCLC participants to enter records on-line, and for effecting more efficient distribution of records than via LC tapes. Some informants specifically mentioned LSP as a way to increase the RLIN library participation in CONSER.

Hardly any of the individuals interviewed had a clear idea of how Linked Systems would work. Most informants views on LSP are murky and diverse. Comments usually included a statement that it was sure to be a good thing, but some reservations

accompanied that statement. Knowing the dynamic nature of serials, but not knowing the number of times an individual record is currently accessed, it often was felt by the informants that we do not have enough information to comment intelligently about how LSP could work for CONSER. One warning was received that CONSER should not look at Linked Systems as the "panacea" it is touted to be.

One informant said that, ideally, CONSER should be an LSP operation like NACO. Like the LC Name Authority File (LCNAF), CONSER is a file of manageable size, and like LCNAF, it could therefore be loaded into each bibliographic utility in its entirety. It could, like LCNAF, be updated and distributed online.

Discussion

Even if the Linked Systems Project would not be a panacea for users of RLIN (and other systems) that do not now catalog on OCLC, it is a concept that needs to be explored. However, there is too little information about current access to records on OCLC and almost nothing is known about what would happen if additional systems were linked to OCLC and each other. The potential for movement of records back and forth among files is higher for serials than it is for authority records. Where would the database of record be located and how would that database be identified are critical operational questions for CONSER and LSP.

Recommendations

G8.1. Since very few people understand how LSP will work, CONSER's stake-holders should educate themselves on the project and its potential. Once educated, they should examine ways in which CONSER could benefit from LSP and incorporate those ways in the work to achieve the goals derived from this study.

G8.2. With the possibility of a linked systems project for CONSER, the issues of uploading, downloading, and modifying records at both the local and national level must also be addressed by CONSER's stake-holders.

G8.3. CONSER cannot and should not take the role of LSP developer, but it should influence LSP developments so that they favor the CONSER project, or at the very least, do not interfere with it.

G8.4. CONSER should be considered the primary candidate for the first LSP bibliographic link.

G9. CONSER Operations: Holdings

The subject of holdings was discussed at length by CONSER's planners. Because it was wholly impractical to include holdings

data in CONSER records, they wisely decided to provide no more information than a library's identifying symbol. In the period since CONSER began, the bibliographic utilities devised local data records to accommodate holdings information. Each utility has its own format for these records and, because they are in this sense proprietary, none are part of CONSER.

Holdings locations do exist in CONSER records in the 850 field as a result of the NST operation. Informants made few comments about the use of that field other than that it does speed the reporting for those libraries supplying their holdings information online. It has not been seen as an ideal solution for OCLC participants because they need to look in multiple places for holdings information (the 850, holdings screens, and summary union list records).

A USMARC Format for Holdings and Locations has been developed recently but there are no near-term plans for implementing it at LC or within OCLC. A group of ARL libraries in the Southeastern United States is experimenting with the format as is Harvard University. These experiments may influence LC to begin planning for implementing the format in the near future. OCLC does plan to support the USMARC format, but how or whether that impacts its locally designed format is still unclear.

The subject of holdings was of particular interest to U.S. Newspaper Program participants. They and some other participants are dissatisfied with current procedures for dealing with this matter. Other individuals who work in areas that use locations as well as bibliographic data feel that holdings information should be an integral part of CONSER.

However, not all informants considered holdings to be important for the CONSER project. Not surprisingly, those who feel that the purpose of the database is that of an authoritative bibliographic file do not include holdings among their priorities.

One informant wrote that detailed holdings information belongs in local, not North American, systems for both practical and economic reasons. This person believes that the holdings issue is larger than CONSER and should be addressed at an appropriately wider level.

Discussion

In the early days of CONSER planning, the issue of holdings was of a primary concern since union listing was thought to be a purpose of the database building effort. However, at that time it was felt that a library identifier was the only practical means for identification in a national file. Work would continue on the holdings formats (now finally developed), but how it would actually be incorporated into the bibliographic records was never clear. It still is not clear and results from those institutions

currently examining and implementing the MARC Format for Holdings and Locations are necessary before decisions can be made at the national level.

Holdings are known to be one subject of investigation in OCLC's Oxford Project. This project is OCLC's current strategic planning for system modifications to serve current and future needs. Though no details are available, it appears that the Oxford Project accepts as a given that the OCLC Local Data Record format will continue to serve users needs for holdings and location information.

Recommendations

G9.1. CONSER should not try to be the primary moving force toward implementation of the USMARC Format for Holdings and Locations. The options for implementing the USMARC Holdings and Locations Format within CONSER should be explored. The expected costs (in effort required to implement as well as in dollars) and anticipated benefits need to be carefully considered. CONSER should be alert to ways in which it can benefit from the work that others (e.g. libraries in the Southeast and Harvard) are doing in this area.

G9.2. CONSER should consider the implications of and continue to monitor local adaptations of the holdings format to the national database.

G10. CONSER Operations: Documentation

The current documentation for CONSER is considered adequate. Those individuals who remember the early days and the absence of good documentation (as everyone was learning what was needed) are very pleased with what is available now. However, everyone is looking forward to the new edition of the Editing Guide. No specific comments were made during the interviews about the document itself (it is assumed that individuals have had the opportunity and are commenting directly). It was generally agreed that good documentation should be a given, especially when there is no strong training program or quality control process in place.

The following suggestions were made at the June participants' meeting:

Establish a clearinghouse for existing and proposed documentation, policies, and guidelines to ensure that each participant is able to obtain fully-current information on all aspects of the Project.
Establish more formal arrangements than now exist for revising documentation and policies.
Eliminate inconsistencies between CONSER documentation and OCLC serials documentation so that libraries cataloging on OCLC effectively have only one set of documents.

Discussion

Though not a high-priority issue in the interviews, documentation is still considered important. According to participants, LC is doing an excellent job of revising the CONSER Editing Guide. OCLC has a responsibility to its libraries to produce documents that support its available systems. Certainly efforts to reduce inconsistencies between CONSER and OCLC documentation should be supported, but it must also be recognized that OCLC institutions do not need to know all CONSER processing details.

Participants were concerned with the process of formulation of documentation and were interested in reviewing additions and changes prior to distribution. There seems to be a feeling that decisions are made arbitrarily and incorporated into documentation without full review and discussion by those who may be affected by the decisions. If CONSER is truly cooperative it would be politic to send items out regularly for review. However, it is recognized that not everyone takes the time to do an adequate review. The documentation's review process should be taken as seriously as that of its promulgation.

Recommendations

G10.1 The work on the CONSER Editing Guide should be brought to conclusion quickly.

G10.2. CONSER should establish a documentation review process.

G10.3. Inconsistencies between CONSER and OCLC documentation should be eliminated when possible.

H. Statistics

There were no strong opinions on statistics. A number of participants do not believe that the statistics being kept are used, nor are they sure that the correct elements are being recorded (especially to be noted are the modifications to records that require the identification of the 040 =c, when there have been numerous =d). Statistics cited that are of general interest are:

The number of serial records in the OCLC database
The number of serial records in the MARC-Serials file
The number of serial records in the OCLC database that have been modified by CONSER participants, but are not in the MARC-Serials file
The number of new CONSER records created each year
The number of records CONSER participants modified each year
The number of records self-authenticated

If LC or OCLC undertook to distribute all CONSER records together in a single tape service -- thereby eliminating the distinction between those that are MARC-Serials and those that are distributed on the unauthenticated CONSER tape -- the second and third items in this list might combined into one. However, if CONSER records are defined as those distributed through MARC-Serials, there would be no need for the third category.

Recommendations of the participants at their June meeting include:

Develop means by which statistics can be created and maintained automatically.
Eliminate statistics now used that appear to have no current or future value.
Distribute an annual statistics report.

Discussion

Statistics can be extremely valuable tools for planning and evaluation. CONSER needs to use them as a means to indicate growth as well as to monitor activity from its participants. However, over the years, participants have not been consistent in their reporting. It seems strange that in an automated system, tracking activity has relied on hash marks and paper forms. The best means for counting would be using the computer. As OCLC has developed its more sophisticated methods for monitoring terminal and institution activities, it would appear logical that CONSER could take advantage of OCLC's capability to provide specific information on activities.

CONSER statistics should not be developed in a vacuum. The needs and capabilities of OCLC (particularly in view of Project Oxford) should be considered. In addition, the needs of serials users outside CONSER should be considered. Statistics should provide them with information about the nature of the database and its yearly growth.

Recommendations

H1. CONSER should determine what statistics will accurately reflect the nature of, and activity within, the database.

H2. CONSER statistics given to participants should include, at least:

The number of serial records in the OCLC database
The number of serial records in the MARC-Serials file
The number of new CONSER records created each year
The number of records CONSER participants modified each year
The number of records self-authenticated

H3. CONSER should advise OCLC on the need to develop a method to create and maintain statistics automatically.

H4. CONSER should provide an annual detailed statistics report to its participants and a summary report for public distribution.

H5. CONSER should use detailed database statistics available from either OCLC or the Library of Congress as management tools. For example, statistics can be used to monitor record quality by looking for unusual subfield patterns or tag combinations and to identify gaps in the database by looking for missing codes or values.

I. Costs

When informants were asked about the costs of CONSER participation, the most common response was that each institution's serial cataloging/processing costs are so intertwined with the CONSER work that it is impossible to dissociate them from one another. The additional costs borne for participating in CONSER are believed to be far outweighed by the benefits accrued through participation.

At their June meeting, the CONSER participants voiced a general recommendation that an organization develop means to expedite record creation and contain costs. Their other suggestions were as follows:

Monitor implementation of OCLC's new pricing structure and make adjustments if its implementation should prove to be unfair to CONSER participants.

Attempt to find means by which OCLC does not routinely assign special library identifiers to CONSER participants for billing purposes.

Urge OCLC to investigate ways to change the billing mechanism so that it is more flexible and requires less paperwork from participants.

Since some participants must justify costs of local CONSER operations to management, systematically provide ammunition for them.

Discussion

The major concerns for participants were pricing and billing issues by OCLC. However, in addition to these specific concerns, it can be noted that CONSER has not done an overall cost-benefit study of the project since its beginnings. In fact, there seems to be a reluctance to consider what the costs of CONSER have been over the years. As a model for cooperative database building, a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the project could provide some insight for similar projects.

Another consideration is that potential participants are interested in knowing the costs for participation. Although the benefits are widely promoted, the economics of doing the work are not readily available for review. There are now added costs for

NACO and self-authentication that need to be identified for current as well as potential participants.

LC's investigation for ways to improve the handling of multiple versions has already been discussed. In addition to making records for multiple versions easy to use, the results of this study should make cataloging more efficient and therefore less costly. CONSER should support LC's Serial Record Division in its contribution to the study.

Recommendations

I1. CONSER should accept the suggestions made in the June Participants' meeting:

- Monitor implementation of OCLC's new pricing structure and make adjustments if its implementation should prove to be unfair to CONSER participants.
- Attempt to find means by which OCLC does not routinely assign special library identifiers to CONSER participants for billing purposes.
- Urge OCLC to investigate ways to change the billing mechanism so that it is more flexible and requires less paperwork from participants.
- Since some participants must justify costs of local CONSER operations to management, systematically provide ammunition for them.

I2. CONSER should explore the feasibility of conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the project.

I3. CONSER participants who are also NACO and self-authenticating members should be encouraged to share their cost information with interested parties.

I4. CONSER should support investigatory efforts to make serials cataloging more efficient.

J. CONSER Membership

Originally, membership in CONSER was limited to those libraries represented in CONSER planning meetings (the Toronto Group) with the addition of a few that were eager to join and that were welcomed by the group. In CONSER I, further members were added upon concurrence of the Participants Group, the Advisory Group, LC, NLC, and OCLC. After the change-over to OCLC management, the Participants Group adopted a set of membership guidelines. The criteria expressed in these guidelines are as follow:

1. Uniqueness of collection: special collections minimum overlap (50%).

2. Excellence of bibliographic data: data conforms to national and international standards.

3. Sufficient resources to support participation: qualified and experienced staff; ability to input all current serials cataloging and to provide surrogates; available equipment.

4. System workloads: Can LC and NLC support authentication workload? Can OCLC support workload?

5. Special contributions: considered on a case-by-case basis.

Demonstration of sufficiency:

1. Collection developments policy; serials budget; collection profile (including size); sample comparison with CONSER file.

2. Evaluation by technical expert of sample cataloging data, provided cataloging data is selected randomly from New Serial Titles or National Union Catalog reports.

3. Organizational charts; procedural manuals; workflow charts; size of staff; budget for copying.

4. To be determined by LC, NLC, and OCLC.

In applying these criteria, participants agreed that they would not announce publicly that CONSER was entertaining applications for membership. They recognized that the workload of the Centers of Responsibility was so great that new members could be added only in very small numbers. Although they also recognized the need to find libraries that could fill gaps in CONSER coverage, they took no action to do so. Subsequently, Indiana University was the first library to be admitted under the new guidelines.

The CONSER study by the ARL Task Force on Bibliographic Control in 1980 proposed three categories of CONSER membership:

1) Centers of Responsibility - Institutions responsible for the review, verification, and authentication of records contributed by them as well as those contributed by other institutions.

2) Bibliographic Participants - Institutions that are libraries contributing their own current and retrospective cataloging, created with piece(s) in hand, and submitting surrogates to the Centers of Responsibility.

3) Union List Participants - Institutions providing data contributed to them by other libraries, usually input with no piece in hand. Authentication of these records is not performed until upgraded by a Bibliographic Participant.

When the Participants Group met to consider these recommendations in 1980, it accepted the first two and, because of the burden they imposed on libraries in the first two categories, decided that union list participants should no longer be accepted for membership.

At the June 1985 Participants' Meeting, six membership recommendations were made:

Increase membership, help lessen the load on existing participants.

Seek out good candidates; do not simply wait for volunteers to offer themselves.

Evaluate libraries interested in participating for their levels of output of new serials records as well as the quality of cataloging and their willingness to self-authenticate and join NACO.

Establish continuing membership requirements, monitor participants.

Develop policies and procedures for dropping inactive members.

Investigate possibility that the British Library, now an observer, become an active participant. Participants discussed implications of OCLC's loading of British Library records. Numerous problems were raised, including the absence in current arrangements of provision for authority control, differences in cataloging practices, and third-party use restrictions imposed by the British Library.

[Note: UK MARC records created by the British Library are being added to the OCLC database under a license to OCLC.]

The group expressed a generally favorable view toward participation of publishers, producers of abstracting and indexing services, and subscription agencies, but made no concrete recommendations.

Most informants had no strong feelings about the types of institutions that should be members of CONSER. The most frequent response to this series of questions was that it did not matter who the CONSER participants were as long as new members (and old) agreed to follow the same set of guidelines and to input records to a certain level. (That level, however, was often unspecified or identified only as the level to which everyone agrees.)

Current membership in CONSER is on an institutional basis with most of the institutions being national and research libraries. Comments from the informants indicated there is continued support for those two types of institutions to be the base group within CONSER.

During the interview discussions of membership criteria, the following general suggestions were made about the types of institutions that could be part of CONSER:

Large research libraries with strong serial collections
Libraries having good quality serial collections
Any institution with good quality serial cataloging
Libraries with any specialized serial collection
Non-library institutions that maintained good quality serial collections
Only libraries

More specific categories and particular institutions that were cited as possible members included:

Other National Libraries (e.g., British Library and National Library of Australia)
All Federal Libraries
Center for Research Libraries
Chemical Abstracts Service
Faxon
Ebsco
University Microfilms International

Informants also suggested participation on a geographical or regional basis. There was support for general participants (for the maintenance work) as well as special subject participants. A precedence has been set already for partial membership with those institutions participating in the U.S. Newspaper Program.

As long as the system can handle the extra load and as long as the prospective members agree to follow CONSER conventions, rules and procedures, there seems to be little concern as to who does or does not participate in CONSER. According to informants, the more difficult questions to answer include:

Who would contact prospective members?
Who would select them?
Who would monitor them?
How many additional participants can the systems handle?

Increase in membership was generally encouraged, but it was often suggested that the expansion be cautious. A wholesale attempt to bring in a large group of institutions was not recommended.

One additional observation made by a few informants was that it may be too late for some institutions' participation to benefit CONSER. Retrospective conversion projects at their libraries gave them the opportunity to pass through a number of older CONSER records. Since the institution was not a CONSER participant, all of the editing done to those records effectively was lost to the project. Some did supply OCLC with change request notifications, but others found the process of supplying the necessary information too costly and did not.

Discussion

Since one of the objectives that the participants articulated in 1979 is to assist the national libraries of both Canada and the United States to establish and maintain a machine-readable serials database, it is logical that CONSER should include those libraries. It is also reasonable to include national libraries outside the U.S. and Canada, especially the two others in the ABACUS group. (ABACUS is the Association of Bibliographic Agencies of Britain, Australia, Canada and the United States). Because Japan also uses the MARC format and because Japanese vernacular cataloging is difficult and expensive to create in North American libraries, the Japanese National Diet Library should also be considered.

Expansion of the membership to national libraries outside North America could present problems, however. Some of these libraries have their own interpretation of widely accepted policies and practices for cataloging serials. It has been difficult enough getting large research libraries, LC, and NLC, to be able to agree on the way serials should be cataloged. There have been compromises on all sides regarding how serials should be handled. With the addition of other institutions that do follow the same rules, but are not bound to follow the same interpretations, more record conflicts could develop. The British Library in particular was mentioned in this context. It is important to keep this potential problem in mind as expansion of membership is considered.

Another issue should also be mentioned. There is an already existing machine-readable serials database in the international sector, the ISDS file. In considering possible expansion of CONSER outside of the North American continent, the implications of that expansion on the work being done for the ISDS cannot be ignored. To what extent can the files complement each other? Where will the files be in competition? A further difficulty in expansion outside North America is the wide variance in practice observed by libraries abroad. Even those that use the MARC format do so in ways that vary considerably from North American practice.

CONSER participation is voluntary, yet once an institution becomes a participant, it has external responsibilities and obligations that its parent institution must recognize and support. Insofar as possible, CONSER should be able to provide the necessary backing to the participant as it seeks that support within its administration.

Inactive participants should be dropped. CONSER should have a policy for monitoring participation and inactive participants should be dropped automatically from current membership (an inactive status could be developed). The CONSER membership policy needs teeth. Participating institution administrators need to know that their organization will be dropped if they do not provide needed resources for effective participation. CONSER must resist the temptation to overlook poor quality or inactive participation. If membership policy is weak, current active members suffer.

Research libraries have been and continue to be the most likely candidates for CONSER participation. Their broadly based collections, staff expertise, and general organizational stability are characteristics that lend them to CONSER more readily than any other group.

Unfortunately, many of the largest research libraries belong to the Research Libraries Group and do their serials cataloging on RLIN. Two CONSER libraries that had used OCLC, joined RLG and became inactive. (One does contribute its unique records in grant-supported conversion projects.) Another library joined CONSER after joining RLG, and it too is inactive. Theoretically, these libraries can do CONSER cataloging on OCLC and enter records again into RLIN. They should not be expected to perform this double-cataloging. It is also possible to make their CONSER contributions by tapeload; this too has too many drawbacks to be a realistic possibility. The situation of these and other RLG libraries that are potential CONSER participants was a driving force behind the 1980 resolution of the Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries, and it has been a driving force in the development of the Linked Systems Project.

Libraries that are not research-library size but that have large collections of serials are also good candidates for CONSER membership.

In addition, organizations with small, but specialized, collections could be of benefit to CONSER as it reviews the gaps in the database. Identifying the locations of collections with titles not included in the CONSER database will require some investigation.

One suggested solution for identifying organizations with subject strengths would be to use the National Shelflist Count and the North American Collections Inventory Project (NCIP). Use of NCIP, along with encouraging participation in NACO and self-authentication, could ensure the best utilization of resources to

build both bibliographic and authority records for the CONSER database.

Some informants spoke of adding a category of membership called: maintainers of the database. In light of the findings of concern in both quality control and maintenance, it is important that participants are responsive to bibliographic changes in the records. Some informants suggested that the larger research libraries are often so caught up in the intricacies of special cataloging problems that they fail to do regular maintenance on already cataloged titles. Therefore, they suggest the inclusion of participants who may not necessarily fit the criteria of a unique collection, but are willing to perform the maintenance function.

In CONSER's early days, union list participants tended to fall into a maintenance category of membership. As already stated, in 1980 the Participants Group decided not to solicit new union list members because of the burden they placed on the rest of the membership. In light of the support for regional participation, it may be wise to re-examine the role union list agents could play for CONSER.

There is no strong support for non-library participants in CONSER at this time. Those potential participant groups include the subscription services, abstracting and indexing (A&I) services, and publishers. Often it is assumed that these groups have completely different purposes in mind regarding bibliographic control. That their definitions of control may differ is true, but there has not been enough dialogue between these groups and CONSER to determine accurately that their needs differ.

Subscription services already make some use of CONSER records, primarily to enhance their own files with ISSN and some standardized bibliographic information. The services have a special (economic) need to maintain subscription information. Data elements providing that information (frequency, price, address) were cited often by informants as precisely those parts of records not changed quickly enough by CONSER members. However, if a means for participation is to be considered, it will have to take into account the different systems developed by the services as well as a possibility of moving information back and forth in a wholly machine-based mode.

Abstracting and indexing services are already participating in CONSER through its Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project. This participation is a funneled operation with all information coming in to the project staff at this time, but soon to be coming in either to NSDP or NLC. Recognizing that the funnel approach does not always work to an institution's advantage, an exploration should be made into different ways for the A&I services to supply their title coverage information to CONSER. This exploration will need to include an education process as well as a technical analysis.

Most of the A&I services are not users of either cataloging rules or the MARC format and, although they recognize the value of standardized information, it is not cost effective for them to maintain a staff of serials catalogers. They do have, however, language and subject skills that could be of benefit to CONSER. Since the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services (NFAIS) has been co-sponsoring the current project and worked with a similar NSF project in the early days of CONSER, they should be heavily involved in continuing the work with A&I services.

Serials publishers as a group are familiar with CONSER for the most part, if they are at all, through their association with the National Serials Data Program. The program developed with the U.S. Postal Service to increase use of the ISSN has had a major positive impact on CONSER and the OCLC database. New titles and title changes are more rapidly identified and added to the CONSER database. Publishers, like all other non-library serials information providers, have to be concerned with the economics of any project they undertake. If there is a role for publishers beyond that of the use of ISSN, exploration could best be made in consultation with the American Association of Publishers.

Recommendations

J1. An active Membership Committee should be re-established for CONSER. It should be composed of a representative from each of the following: Library of Congress, National Library of Canada, OCLC, Participant Group, and Advisory Group. The Committee should review applications and make recommendations to the Participants Group for vote and confirmation.

J2. CONSER should provide for different levels of membership: Full, Partial, Temporary.

J3. Applications for Full Membership in CONSER should include:

a) Desire to participate in a cooperative program
b) Willingness to abide by the "agreed-upon principles"
c) Demonstration that current serials cataloging conforms to national and international standards
d) Sufficient institutional resources to support participation
e) Institutional commitment to send staff to LC for training
f) Willingness to support continuing education for staff
g) Willingness to participate in NACO
h) Willingness to self-authenticate
i) Contribution of complete bibliographic information for current serials cataloging
j) Willingness to have work reviewed

J4. Partial CONSER membership should be available to institutions who provide specific types of information to records in the database (such as frequency and subscription information), who are willing to perform a maintenance function (e.g., providing necessary links among bibliographic records), or who are using the CONSER database as a means to facilitate the building of associated files (such as the U.S. Newspaper Program).

J5. Temporary CONSER membership should be available to those institutions who are planning to conduct major retrospective conversion projects and are willing to invest the additional resources necessary to provide the name-authority and self-authentication work.

J6. The burden of proof for CONSER membership should be after the fact of acceptance and institutions who cannot live up to their commitments should withdraw.

J7. Membership should be expanded as quickly as LC training and the OCLC system can support it.

J8. New participants who can fill gaps in CONSER coverage should be sought out. CONSER should make use of the National Shelflist Count and the North American Collections Inventory Project to identify institutions with needed subject strengths.

J9. The Membership Committee should use database statistics to monitor quantitative levels of participation. Information on the quality of participant contributions should be provided regularly to the Membership Committee by the Library of Congress.

J10. CONSER should develop a system for giving warnings to libraries whose work does not meet membership requirements. Those that do not respond to warnings within a period of one year should be dropped from membership.

J11. Potential library members who are willing to participate in NACO and the self-authentication program should be given priority over other potential members.

J12. CONSER should investigate third-party arrangements by which participants may systematically create CONSER records that are originated by libraries or other organizations (e.g., contractors, union list participants) that are in neither CONSER nor OCLC.

J13. Subscription agencies, such as Faxon and Ebsco, should be encouraged to participate in CONSER as Partial Members.

J14. The participation of A&I services through the CONSER A&I Coverage Project should continue to be supported. Additional means for participation should be explored with assistance from the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services.

J15. Possible roles for publishers within CONSER, in addition to NSDP cooperation, should be encouraged and developed with assistance from the American Association of Publishers.

J16. The relationship between the ISDS and the CONSER database and among the ISDS agencies (e.g., NSDP, ISDS/Canada, and the International Centre of the ISDS) should be explored.

J17. A closer relationship with national libraries in other major MARC countries should be explored. These countries include the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan.

K. CONSER Management Structure

CONSER's management structure receives little attention in the literature. One dramatic exception concerns the transition from CLR to OCLC management. The minutes of the first Participants Meeting held subsequent to the change-over show that the National Library of Canada then seriously considered dropping out of the project. Speaking for NLC, Ms. Durance said that NLC was reluctant to participate in a project in which it had no management role and which was not managed by a government agency. Although CLR, LC, and OCLC subsequently persuaded NLC to continue in the project, the NLC statement and OCLC response did not produce any clarifications regarding management structure.

Informants' suggestions for improving the management of CONSER were broadly based. Many said that they had no difficulty with the current structure and suggested leaving it alone. Others suggested that the Library of Congress should take a more active role (in addition to its increased role in quality control, training, and support at the technical level).

The existing committee structure was cited as a good idea for a cooperative project, but it was suggested that as more players become involved a more concerted means of coordination should be established.

Many informants said that management should be restricted to a single organization. However, they differed as to what organization would be best to run CONSER. They recognized that the Library of Congress has a vested interest in the project and should have a strong say, but they also recognized that the database is a part of the OCLC System and consequently OCLC should influence what happens to it. Another suggestion was that a non-participating organization should be in control of CONSER. Still another was that the Advisory Group be more formalized, and that CONSER participants should pay dues and vote on policy and procedure issues.

Discussion

As previously stated, the current management of CONSER rests with OCLC. As seen by OCLC and LC, that role is of providing a

system in which CONSER can operate, supporting the meetings by providing a site and monetary support for travel, and providing a means of communication among participants.

Cataloging policy and procedures are handled mainly by the Library of Congress in consultation with the participants. LC's role is especially that of responsibility for the quality of the database.

CONSER is governed largely by unwritten rules. This informality is democratic somewhat in the way that the unwritten English constitution is democratic: there are a number of authority-holding bodies. Some are "executive" (OCLC and the Centers of Responsibility) and one is "legislative" (the Participants Group). Each has a reasonably good understanding of its own powers and the limits that others place on these powers.

Because it is unwritten, the structure has a large measure of ambiguity. This circumstance produces a measure of give-and-take into CONSER and may have prevented the devolution of overweening power to any one body.

It is perilously easy to make too much of comparisons such as this one, and there are, of course, significant differences between the English model and the CONSER one. Unlike the English system, there are no courts to resolve conflicts between bodies. Unlike it, CONSER is not a system separate unto itself, but is rather a project within a complex environment of libraries and serials agencies. Unlike the English system (or any other system of government), participation is almost entirely motivated by a sense of wanting to make a contribution to, or to figure largely in a major library program. It is entirely voluntary and there is no coercive element.

Nonetheless, the model both emphasizes the value of a consensual approach to organization and suggests improvements that could be made in CONSER's organizational structure.

At present, CONSER is very self-directed. The CONSER body which represents the world outside CONSER -- the Advisory Group -- has not been given a very useful role. When in 1979 the Participants Group discussed the role of the Advisory Group, it could agree only that it should continue to exist. OCLC subsequently set forth its view of the group's purpose (counsel the participants, review the project's progress, inform others about the project). Apparently, the role of the group has never been addressed since.

Whatever its role, it was generally agreed by most informants that the group should meet regularly and be kept well-informed in order for it to work well. Because it has not met since October 1980, the meeting scheduled for February 1986 is particularly important.

Historically, the Participants Group has held more theoretical than actual power. Most of the direction for CONSER has come not from the group itself, but rather from within it. LC and OCLC are members of the group and, as first-among-equals, together compose its active core. (Apparently because NLC is the only Canadian participant, it does not have as much of a first-among-equals role.) Frequently, decisions said to have been made by the group are actually decisions to which the group does not object that have been made by LC or OCLC. Between meetings, of course, the two, in practice, control the project.

Instances can be cited in which the group formed committees to work on specific problems or issues. Sometimes the committees never met and produced no action. In other cases, the committees were made up entirely of representatives from LC and OCLC and the committees' actions were therefore the actions of one or both.

One person who wrote to the consultants stated that the Operational Staff Group sometimes formulates policies instead of discussing their implementation. This person also pointed out that the lead-time before a decision must be reached is sometimes too short for the Participants Group to deal with the matter.

The Participants Group is not a rubber stamp, but it frequently, and perhaps unconsciously, has taken a passive rather than an active role in CONSER decision-making.

Discussion and implementation of policies are the responsibilities of the Operational Staff Group. The meetings of this group brought the most positive response from those who were interviewed. It is important for the individuals doing the work, or responsible for the work within their institutions, to have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis.

Some informants believe the current somewhat vague organizational structure is good. They think too much structure could stifle the cooperative nature of the project. Others, however, would like to see a stronger Committee authority in order to remove that authority from the two organizations that now seem to "run" CONSER -- LC and OCLC.

In addition, some informants wish to see either a more formalized arrangement (possibly contractual) or all administration for CONSER resting with one institution.

No matter what comments were received from informants, it was clear that some coordination and clarification of CONSER's administration and management is necessary. The strategic planning process will provide CONSER with the direction it needs for the future, but in order for the process to begin, an organization must take responsibility to move things along. Since the Library of Congress requested the study, the contractors suggest that LC take this responsibility.

Recommendations

KA. CONSER's current organizational structure is appropriate and reasonably effective. Its democratic nature is desirable in a cooperative project; indeed it could be emulated by other cooperative projects that have since been developed. Nonetheless, the organizational structure can and should be improved.

KB. The Library of Congress should take responsibility for superintending consideration of the CONSER study and subsequent action to create a plan of action for the project. (See also recommendation L1, below.)

K1. CONSER Management Structure: Advisory Group

The Advisory Group should be rejuvenated. In preparation for the February meeting each organization that has previously been represented on the group should be asked whether it wishes to continue to be represented and, if so, who its representative will be at the next meeting. Each should be informed that the future of CONSER will be the main focus of discussion at the meeting, that its representative should be given as much guidance as possible on this subject prior to the meeting, and that the representative should come to the meeting prepared to make substantive recommendations on behalf of his or her organization.

In particular, the Advisory Group should be given the task of advising the Participants Group on the elements of a strategic plan for CONSER's future. The outline of such a plan, based on recommendations made in this report, is given as an appendix (see Appendix I). Although the February 1986 meeting should initiate discussion within the Advisory Group on this subject, the group's work on strategic planning may take some months to accomplish.

One aspect of strategic planning should be examination of the composition and functions of the Advisory Group.

The role of the Advisory Group as counselor to the Participants Group is a useful one. It does not make sense for the Advisory Group to meet after the forthcoming Participants Group meeting. A much better alternative is the scheduling of a joint meeting of the Advisory and Participants Groups on one day <u>followed by</u> a meeting of the Participants Group on the next day.

Recommendation

K1.1. The CONSER Advisory Group should be rejuvenated and given the task of advising the Participants Group on the elements of a strategic plan for CONSER's future.

K2. CONSER Management Structure: Participants Group

Letters (like those sent to organizations represented on the Advisory Group) should be sent to participating libraries. Each should be informed of the nature and importance of the February meetings and advised that persons sent should be decision-makers having an appropriate level of managerial authority (e.g. heads of technical services departments). They should be asked to prepare their representatives to discuss policy matters and make decisions regarding CONSER's future. They should be informed that the Participants' Group possesses the power to shape this future and advised to take this role seriously. The meeting of the Advisory Group and its expected role should also be explained.

In future, meetings of the Participants Group should be set by the group itself (the group could, for example determine the next meeting as the last order of business of each meeting). Draft agendas should be sent well in advance of each meeting and stress should be given to the fact that they are drafts and that participants can and should raise other topics, either having them distributed in advance or bringing them to the meeting.

The group should consider electing a chair and vice-chair/chair-elect and giving these individuals responsibility for presiding at meetings and coordinating meeting tasks with OCLC and LC.

Although it seems improbable that they would do so and not especially desirable, the participants could decide to incorporate themselves as did the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials. Incorporation would, in effect, codify the unwritten rules under which they operate and, for all practical purposes, guarantee their possession of final decision-making authority within the project. It makes sense for them to consider this possibility at least as a means for focusing attention on the past tendency of the group to accept a relatively passive role in CONSER policy-making.

Recommendations

K2.1. The CONSER Participants Group should be the policy-makers for the CONSER Project.

K2.2. The CONSER Participants Group should set its own meetings. The group should consider electing a chair and vice-chair/chair-elect and give these individuals responsibility for presiding at meetings and coordinating meeting tasks with LC, NLC, and OCLC.

K2.3. The CONSER Participants Group should consider the possibility of incorporating itself in order to codify the unwritten rules under which it operates and guarantee its possession of final decision-making authority within the project.

K3. CONSER Management Structure: Library of Congress

The desire to have LC assume the responsibility that was to be given it in CONSER II is a natural one. LC takes this responsibility for NACO and is developing a shared cataloging program for monographs in which it expects to have similar control. However, it is wholly impractical for LC to accept this responsibility for CONSER at this time. In addition, CONSER's operational structure currently works reasonably well, and, as suggested above, it is in keeping with CONSER's democratic operational structure that LC not now be given full responsibility for the project.

Nonetheless, recognition of this fact should not be allowed to limit discussion of ways in which LC's role can and should be enlarged. LC has established the position of CONSER Coordinator for managing LC's role in the project. The office of the CONSER Coordinator has potential for becoming a major center for CONSER coordination. This possibility should be given serious consideration, for the present, and especially as CONSER grows and changes.

Recommendations

K3.1. The Library of Congress should continue to participate in and provide project management for the CONSER Project.

K3.2. The role of the Library of Congress within CONSER should be enlarged by taking advantage of the potential of the Office of the CONSER Coordinator to provide a means for CONSER coordination.

K3.3. The Coordinator's Office should establish a documentation clearinghouse and should become the central node in a network for electronic communications among participants. In addition, it should act as a central source for information on all aspects of the project barring those that directly concern OCLC's operations.

K3.4. The Coordinator's Office should also be responsible for designing and implementing the training and quality review programs for CONSER.

K3.5. In carrying out the recommended enlarged responsibilities, the CONSER Coordinator's Office should maintain close communication with OCLC.

K4. CONSER Management Structure: National Library of Canada

The current view of the role of the National Library of Canada is that it participates in the following:[10]

Performs project management (shares responsibility with LC and OCLC, but, as only Canadian participant, has somewhat smaller share than the other two).

Acts as a Center of Responsibility.

a) Provides authentication of the bibliographic data for Canadian serials input by other CONSER participants, including the Library of Congress.

b) Within ISDS/Canada, provides authentication of ISDS data for all Canadian serials.

c) Contributes CAN/MARC records on tape for newly cataloged Canadian serials within the Canadiana cataloging workflow.

d) Enters records online for other Canadian serials held in the National Library Collection.

Generally maintains and upgrades Canadian records on the online CONSER database.

Produces and distributes a microfiche edition of CONSER records

Informants were satisfied with the role the National Library of Canada performs for CONSER and felt NLC should continue to provide the authentication for Canadian imprints, both the bibliographic and ISDS data. A better means for adding newly cataloged items to CONSER is desirable, both from OCLC's and the participants' points of view. Current methods of the tape-loading and working from a save file are cumbersome means for adding records. One other criticism of the NLC records concerned the additional Canadian fields for authority information. They are of local use to NLC, but of no use to most CONSER record users.

As the non-U.S. participant in the CONSER project, NLC can provide an additional perspective to CONSER as it becomes more of an international resource. As the other Center of Authority, NLC has had the experience of the work required for the authentication of CONSER records. CONSER should take advantage of NLC expertise and encourage NLC staff to take an active role with LC in developing training and quality control programs.

NLC should also continue to work with LC and OCLC in a shared capacity of project management and to provide an additional distribution avenue of CONSER records through the CONSER Microfiche and on tape.

Recommendations

K4.1. The National Library of Canada should continue to provide project management for CONSER with the Library of Congress and OCLC.

K4.2. The National Library of Canada should continue to provide the authentication for Canadian imprints.

K4.3. The National Library of Canada should take an active role with the Library of Congress to develop needed training and quality control programs for CONSER participants.

K5. CONSER Management Structure: OCLC

As the host system for the database and as technical manager, OCLC has done a good job. It should continue in both roles. OCLC has indicated it will continue to support CONSER and defer the bibliographic policy and procedures to LC.

The OCLC view of its management is one of technical support and database provider. There are other institutions that perceive OCLC as having much more (and sometimes too much) influence. Participants have no forum within OCLC's management structure like the Users' Council or the Research Libraries Advisory Committee. Some interview respondents would like to develop a users group for CONSER similarly to other OCLC user groups. The purpose of the group would be to lobby for system enhancements for the CONSER project. This could be done by one of the existing groups and/or by contract should there be a need to have a lobby.

There are other suggestions for improvements to the system. Many informant suggestions were not as much germane to CONSER as they were to the treatment of all serial records in OCLC. Some of these are given under the Costs and Statistics sections in CONSER Operations. In addition, informants noted that search strategies for serials often do not work well with the search keys for the OCLC system. OCLC's Oxford Project gives CONSER participants an opportunity to suggest system improvements that would aid CONSER. CONSER can and should pressure OCLC for desirable changes to the system, but should not try to set priorities for OCLC or determine OCLC's strategic plans.

Recommendations

K5.1. OCLC should continue as the host system for the CONSER database and as database manager.

K5.2. CONSER should lobby for desirable system changes within OCLC that would result in more cost-effective participation for its participants.

L. The LC CONSER Coordinator

Because CONSER has taken a pluralistic approach to administration, it has relied for leadership on the talent, imagination,

initiative, and good offices of a number of dedicated persons beginning with Richard Anable.

As noted in the section on Management Structure, this pluralistic approach is desirable in a cooperative project and it has served CONSER surprisingly well. However there is a current need, as has been documented throughout this report, for more focussed leadership for CONSER. The contractors recommend that the LC responsibility of superintending consideration of this report and subsequent action to create a strategic plan for the project be vested in an identified individual. Their choice is the current CONSER Coordinator at LC.

Recommendation

L1. The CONSER Coordinator at LC should be given the responsibility and authority for consideration of this study and the subsequent plan of action.

V

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

A. CONSER's Critics

When CONSER first began there were some who criticized it as over-ambitious. Questions were raised as to whether or not it was really needed. Other questions concerned compatibility problems created by the various sets of rules and standards that CONSER was trying to coordinate. Still other questions concerned who would be in charge and whether the national libraries abdicated their responsibilities by giving power to an unknown group.

Most of the questions from the early critics were answered eventually, but in looking back over the literature of the time, it seems that the primary problem was a lack of communication between critics and those involved in the development of CONSER. To be fair to all parties, it should be pointed out that information was available about CONSER to anyone who asked. Certain legal and contractual matters (i.e., the use of the OCLC system) naturally could not be made available in detail, but the general principles and plan of action were well-distributed.

CONSER appears to suffer from that lack of communication even today. Although CONSER has responsibility for distributing information about itself, the profession also has responsibility for finding out what goes on with CONSER. The project's published materials can and should not address every concern. Choices need to be made as to the value of what should be recorded for posterity. Some of the people who identified problems apparently inherent in CONSER or in the OCLC serials database did not ask questions of or talk to CONSER participants, and their criticism is often unfounded.

CONSER should not be expected to anticipate every question and to head off every possible criticism, but it should answer its critics, not ignore them.

Recommendation

5A. CONSER should promote itself and provide accurate and timely information to the library profession to use in articles about serials.

B. Subject Analysis

During the interviews, in addition to discussing subject gaps in the database, references were also made to the lack of subject analysis for serial records. Since current studies show that access to bibliographic information in libraries with online catalogs is often through the subject headings, CONSER should be increasing its efforts in subject analysis.

Traditionally, access to serial literature has been through indexing and abstracting services. As more of the A&I services' products begin to be linked via computer to the bibliographic records in local catalogs, it seems all the more important to include this group in examining the future of subject analysis for CONSER.

Recommendation

5B. CONSER should begin efforts to examine subject access to serials records by investigating its own practices, promoting research, and offering technical expertise.

C. Future Serials Publishing

The nature of and the information published in serials makes them attractive for experimentation. Publishing is in a state of transition and electronic manuscripts, electronic production, and electronic dissemination are all developing. The larger questions of seriality and serial publications are not only fascinating topics for discussion but opportunities for research.

Recommendations

5C1. CONSER should be examining and exploring the impact changes in serial publishing may have on bibliographic control.

5C2. CONSER should participate and encourage research in projects that investigate the changing nature of serial publishing.

D. Database Ownership

The CONSER project has been cooperative since its inception. The purpose of the project was to make records available to any group that could use them. Some informants were concerned about the OCLC copyright and its impact on CONSER. Although the CONSER records are regularly distributed by the Library of Congress, there was concern by some individuals that LC could be cutoff from that distribution due to copyright restrictions. CONSER should clarify its relationship to OCLC's copyright claims.

Recommendation

5D. CONSER and OCLC should develop a statement on copyright of the CONSER database.

E. Relationship With Other Bibliographic Utilities

CONSER began using the OCLC system because it was the only system at the time that could provide the project with the

necessary technical support. Although the decision to use OCLC has often been criticized, OCLC has provided the technical and managerial support needed to build the database in the last ten years.

Since the early days of CONSER, other bibliographic utilities and large-scale cataloging systems have been established. This study has made a number of references to this matter. Informants and others are concerned that these systems derive insufficient benefit from CONSER and CONSER from them. This is particularly the case with RLIN. However, it should be noted that no matter what system had been chosen, the current situation would still be the case. One institution will have the online database building advantage over any of the others.

Records are made available to all bibliographic utilities and the utilities decide how they make those records available to their members. CONSER has no control over those decisions.

The possibility of switching utilities was mentioned at times during the interviews, but no one wanted CONSER to move from one utility to another. The economic implications for each of the current participants to switch, for example, from OCLC to RLIN were overwhelming. To be truly fair, CONSER would have to consider moving from one utility to another every few years. This did not seem to be an acceptable solution to the multiple utility issue either.

Due to the nature of the large number of participating libraries in OCLC, CONSER's impact is strongest on that utility. Other methods can be explored as technology changes, but in the current environment, it seems best if OCLC continue to provide the necessary database support.

The role for other bibliographic utilities within CONSER is to continue to provide their members with access to CONSER records. As CONSER looks toward the next decade, it should provide a means to incorporate the existence of other bibliographic utilities, as well as local systems, into its plans. The sections on the Linked Systems Project (above) and on System-Independence (below) discuss this matter from a different perspective.

Recommendation

5E. CONSER should continue to be aware of the use of bibliographic utilities other than OCLC as it makes future system plans.

F. System-Independence

At the outset, one of the primary goals of CONSER was the elimination of wasteful duplication of effort in the creation of bibliographic records for serials, and, of course, this wasted

effort is not unique to serials. The library community has made great strides toward overcoming the problem as it affects records for books and other materials as well as serials. Examples include cooperative projects like NACO, Major Microforms, and the planned LC/RLG Coordinated Cataloging Program for cataloging certain monographs. In addition, the remarkable degree of standardization that libraries have achieved is an enabling mechanism for all forms of shared cataloging.

These developments, which lead one to believe that librarianship is among the best-coordinated of professions, have greatly increased the efficiency of library operations and saved vast, though uncounted, sums. Unfortunately, they have not eliminated duplication of effort.

An ideal that seems to be held implicitly by many librarians is the prompt cataloging of all, or nearly all materials by the Library of Congress. This is a task that LC could never perform. In fact, in these times of fiscal constraint, LC's contribution to the North American pool of records is declining relative to the contributions of other libraries.

Current developments in library automation contain elements both of continued efforts to eliminate duplication and of strong pressures to increase it. LC's increasing reliance on the work of others and the flourishing of projects like CONSER provide a positive impetus. The growth of integrated local systems, particularly proprietary turn-key systems provides a negative impetus.

As already pointed out, CONSER's planners were aware of the potential for advances in electronic communications to assist in preventing duplication. This potential is on its way to becoming partially realized within the Linked Systems Project implementation for NACO participants. The extension of LSP to bibliographic records and the immeasurably larger ideal of total open systems interconnection (OSI) offer the possibility of enabling all library systems to interact. The bibliographic utilities would link to each other and LC would be tied directly into the shared cataloging network. All libraries would be able to enjoy the benefits of integrated local systems without giving up the advantages of shared cataloging (including avoidance of duplicated effort).

To CONSER, OSI offers the possibility of creating a "system-independent" database. This would permit expansion of CONSER membership to libraries -- such as many of those in RLG -- that have much to contribute but that, for a variety of reasons, will not catalog on OCLC. OSI could permit libraries belonging to any bibliographic utility -- or to none -- to do CONSER work online. In addition, the distribution of CONSER records would be made much more efficient. Any library, union list organization, or serials agency could obtain individual records, specific subsets, or the entire database electronically. As the OSI concept evolved, it could be possible for libraries to create CONSER

records in any database: a local one, a regional network's, or a bibliographic utility's. In fact, ultimately, CONSER records could be created, updated, maintained, and used wherever they happened to be. This would be true system-independence.

Unfortunately, the costs of implementing OSI are high and the task is extremely complicated and difficult. Establishing inter-system agreements for open systems would be far more difficult than applying the technical expertise needed to make the links possible, and the technical job would itself be extremely difficult.

As already stated, some informants warned against viewing the Linked Systems Project as a panacea. Too little is now known about the future development of LSP and its wider OSI possibilities to make predictions respecting CONSER. CONSER, as a well-defined project with an excellent track record, should, as has also already been noted, be explored as the first implementation of the Linked Systems Project for bibliographic records. The wider implications of LSP and OSI deserve attention, but strategic planning should not be founded upon any fixed assumptions regarding their development. CONSER's policy should be that of influencing a favorable direction in planning. CONSER should not itself attempt to establish intersystem links.

Recommendations

5F1. CONSER's participants and management should support the development of other programs designed to cooperatively build files and eliminate duplication of effort.

5F2. CONSER should learn about and monitor the development of any systems designed to provide interactive links for bibliographic files.

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APPENDIX A

Statement of Work: CONSER Futures

This work statement is designed to guide a contractor in the preparation of a report recommending future directions for the CONSER Project.

1.0 BACKGROUND

The CONSER Project has been in operation for ten years. The CONSER "concept" is over twelve years old. The CONSER data base, constructed through cooperative conversion of serials cataloging to machine readable form, has over 550,000 records.

Among the benefits realized through the CONSER Project are the following: serial titles are cataloged once rather than separately by each CONSER Participant with holdings for a given title; the titles are cataloged following common guidelines; the participants share the responsibility for maintaining the accuracy of the records which reside in the data base; the policy and technical decisions made in support of CONSER are documented and are of general relevance to all serials librarians; through the MARC Distribution Service CONSER cataloging in machine readable form is made generally available.

Despite the considerable achievements of the CONSER Project to date, more remains to be done. Important questions about CONSER's future should be addressed: What aspects of CONSER must be strengthened or expanded? What aspects should be properly left as they are? What can be done without? Are there appropriate new initiatives and directions to be taken?

Now is an auspicious time to take the 'pulse' of CONSER , so that the Project may proceed in the most useful way possible. The trend of the Project has been toward yet more online activity and away from paper handling, e.g. it is now possible for a participant to report to New Serial Titles online to OCLC. Participants now have the option of authenticating their own records, as well as making online modifications to records already authenticated by the Library of Congress. The number of participants has increased, as has the number of institutions to which the CONSER capability has been extended--witness the U.S. Newspaper Program and the CONSER Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project.

Given the recent changes affecting the Library of Congress' authentication workload, an earlier constraint on expanded membership has been moderated. Several institutions recently have expressed interest in joining CONSER. Both we and they believe that the existing membership guidelines may not be appropriate for the present, much less for the future.

A meeting of the CONSER Participants will be scheduled before July 1, 1985. We hope the meeting will be a useful forum for initial gathering of ideas and impressions relevant to this study.

2.0 TASKS TO BE PERFORMED BY CONTRACTOR

For the tasks below, the analytical basis for the recommendations shall be given, describing to the extent necessary the status quo of the Project.

2.1 Goals and Objectives

The contractor should clearly identify and define appropriate goals and objectives of CONSER as regards its proper function and scope of operation for the future. The analysis should begin with an appraisal of CONSER's current goals and objectives and provide recommendations for any modifications believed desirable (or reaffirm the existing principles).

Considerations: While the present goals and objectives have given good guidance, are they adequate for the future? Do they need to be broadened or otherwise reformulated to direct the Project for the next five years, if not into the next century? Has there been sufficient success in meeting CONSER's current stated objectives? Should the CONSER Project take on new functions? What implications does the Linked Systems Project have for the Project? What implications does the MARC Format for Holdings and Locations have for the Project? To what extent should records already in the data base be converted to AACR2 forms of description?

2.2 Membership Criteria

The contractor should provide recommendations as to the proper membership criteria, the optimal rate of growth in membership, and the interrelation between membership criteria and the membership growth rate.

Considerations: The CONSER membership can increase but the growth must not compromise the quality of CONSER records and services. Would it be appropriate to define categories of membership (e.g. "maintaining" as opposed to "retrospectively converting")? Would it be appropriate to solicit new members? How might this be done? Must new members participate in the Name Authorities Cooperative Project? What role should self-authentication play in membership criteria? Must new participants be part of the academic or government library community? Is there a role for stakeholders such as publishers, producers of abstracting and indexing services, and subscription agencies?

2.3 Tasks

The contractor should identify and describe tasks to be undertaken which would support the proposed goals and objectives, indicating the effect any of these tasks would have on the selection of new members.

Considerations: In addition to constructing a broad based "game plan," identify the type of statistics that need to be compiled, either automatically or manually, to help measure progress toward realization of Project goals and objectives.

2.4 Management Structure

The contractor should provide recommendations for the desired management structure of the CONSER Project, clearly delineating the roles and levels of responsibility of those involved in the support and management of the Project.

3.0 DIRECTION OF AND REPORTING BY CONTRACTOR

The Serial Record Division, in consultation with the Director of Bibliographic Products and Services and the principals at OCLC, Inc. and at the National Library of Canada, will advise the contractor and review all contract work products prior to acceptance by the Library of Congress. Members of the library and information community may be consulted as deemed reasonable by the contractor. The CONSER Operations Coordinator will be the contract monitor.

APPENDIX B

Selective Bibliography

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APPENDIX C

CONSER Study

The Library of Congress has contracted with Jeffrey Heynen, together with Julia Blixrud, to study and make recommendations concerning the CONSER Project. Their work began July 1st and will conclude at the end of September, 1985. The study will address CONSER's goals and objectives, the tasks that need to be performed to accomplish these goals and objectives, organization and governance of the Project, and membership criteria. In carrying out the study Heynen and Blixrud will use published and unpublished records, reports, and analyses; they will invite comments and recommendations at large from interested parties; and they will conduct a small mail survey. Their primary method, however, will be interviews with participants, critics, current and potential stake-holders and beneficiaries, and other interested parties.

Background

The CONSER Project has been in operation for ten years and the concept on which it is founded is over twelve years old.

The CONSER database is large and growing — currently over 550,000 records. CONSER benefits include avoidance of duplication of effort in serials cataloging, shared responsibility for producing and maintaining high quality bibliographic records for serials, availability of records through the Library of Congress MARC Distribution Service, and, in general, Library of Congress quality control and leadership.

Despite considerable achievements, much remains to be done. Questions that face CONSER's participants and coordinators include the following: What aspects of CONSER must be strengthened or expanded? What aspects should be properly left as they are? What can be done without? Are there appropriate new initiatives and directions to be taken?

Some Approaches to Change

This is an auspicious time to undertake a study of CONSER's future. The trend of the Project has been toward yet more online activity and away from paper handling so that, for example, it is now possible for a participant to report to New Serial Titles online directly to OCLC. In addition, participants now have the option of authenticating their own records, as well as making online modifications to records already authenticated by the Library of Congress. The number of participants has increased, as has the number of institutions to which CONSER capability has been extended; examples include the U.S. Newspapers Program and the CONSER Abstracting and Indexing Coverage Project.

Given recent changes affecting the Library of Congress' authentication workload, an earlier constraint on expanded membership has been moderated. Several institutions recently have expressed interest in joining CONSER. Both the Library of Congress and these interested libraries believe that the existing membership guidelines may not be appropriate for the present, much less the future.

At a recent meeting, CONSER participants suggested a number of other improvements to the Project including the following:

Quality Control: systematic spot checking of records; requirements for continuing membership as well as for new membership; expansion of self-authentication and NACO participation among existing CONSER participants; requiring that new members agree to

self authenticate and join NACO; establishing means for participants to alert one another of changes they propose to make in each others' records; initial training and continuing update training for participants; and establishment of policies with respect to third-party record-creation (e.g. participants' use of other libraries or of contractors).

Bibliographic Utility Membership: open membership to participants in utilities other than OCLC; pursuit of the Open Systems Interconnection/Linked Systems Project as an enabling mechanism.

Distribution of Records: Pursuit of the Open Systems Interconnection/Linked Systems Project as a means of improving distribution.

Avoiding Duplication: development of a queuing mechanism for announcing intentions to catalog; finding means for participants and the Library of Congress to share information on cataloging priorities.

Uses, Costs, and Efficiency of Record Creation: development of means to expedite record creation and contain costs; determination of minimally acceptable as well as optimum record for serials, keeping in mind both the many uses to which serial records are and will be put (including online user catalogs and serials control) and the variety of users who will acces them (cataloging and reference librarians, serials and abstracting-indexing publishers, and distributors, as well as scholars, researchers, and students). One possibility to explore is reduction of description and increase in access points.

Participants' Contributions: evaluating libraries interested in participating for their levels of output of new serials records as well as the quality of their cataloging and their willingness to self-authenticate and join NACO.

Documentation, Policies, Guidelines: establishing a clearinghouse for the existing and proposed documentation, policies, and guidelines to ensure that each participant is able to obtain fully-current information on all aspects of the Project; establishing more formal arrangements than now exist for revising these items.

Questions raised about CONSER include:

Standards: In addition to OSI/LSP, mentioned above, what are the implications and opportunities afforded by the MARC Format for Holdings and Locations? To what extent should records already in the database be converted to AACR2 forms?

Membership: Should new members be solicited and, if so, how? Is there a role for publishers, producers of abstracting and indexing services, and subscription agencies?

Statistics: What records should be kept, how should they be used, and how most efficiently collected and produced?

Organization and Management: What organizations ought to have responsibility for CONSER operations and decision-making and how can operations and decisions most effectively be made?

For more information contact: Jeffrey Heynen
CONSER Study
c/o Association of Research Libraries
1527 New Hampshire Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 232-2466 (ARL offices)

APPENDIX D

ARL Newsletter Article

CONSER A&I Coverage Project

With close to 140,000 index notes added to 53,000 unique CONSER records, the CONSER A&I Coverage Project is beginning the process of moving into the maintenance mode. The searching and final review of the titles covered by 136 different A&I products have been completed. All online records that could be identified from the information on hand have been, and any remaining questions have been sent to the A&I services for resolution. Updates to information on title coverage by the participating services are arriving weekly at the A&I Project Office.

Project staff are currently finishing the updating of records with available International Serials Data System (ISDS) information—ISSN, key titles, and abbreviated titles—and gathering surrogates to support record enhancement of the records yet to be updated. Over 5,000 surrogates are now on hand to provide documentation for requests for ISSN and key titles from the ISDS agencies. Original titles for the project are estimated to result in 1,000 new records for the CONSER database and records are being added as surrogates are available.

Libraries have already reported that information on title coverage for serials helps identify high-use journals for collection development purposes. Reference librarians have commented on the usefulness of the abstracting and indexing information as they search for bibliographic citations in particular subject areas. The A&I information also helps with the decision as to which online database to search to find citations from a specific journal. Interest has also been expressed among the A&I services about using the project data to determine overlaps and gaps in title coverage by the services.

The Library of Congress Cataloging Distribution Service is evaluating the possibility of providing customized projects based on the A&I file. Anyone with an interest or need for a specialized A&I product is encouraged to contact Julia Blixrud, CONSER A&I Project Manager, c/o National Serials Data Program, Library of Congress LM509, Washington, DC 20540. Ms. Blixrud changed to a part-time status with the project on July 1, 1985. Any correspondence regarding the project should continue to be directed to her throughout 1985.

Study of the CONSER Project Underway

The Library of Congress has contracted with Jeffrey Heynen to study and make recommendations concerning the CONSER Project. Mr. Heynen, who is a program officer at ARL, is taking a partial leave of absense to perform the study. Julia Blixrud, now working part-time as manager of the CONSER A & I Coverage Project, will also work part-time on the study. Their work began in June and will conclude at the end of September 1985.

The study addresses CONSER's goals and objectives, the tasks needed to accomplish them, organization and governance of the project, and membership criteria. In carrying out the study, Mr. Heynen and Ms. Blixrud will use published and unpublished records, reports, and analyses; they will invite comments and recommendations from interested parties; and they will conduct a small mail survey. Their primary method, however, will be interviews with participants, subscription agents and jobbers, publishers, and other interested parties.

This is an auspicious time to undertake a study of CONSER's future. The project has been in operation for ten years. Its database is large and growing; currently it contains over 550,000 records. A number of benefits to the library community have already resulted from CONSER, including less duplication of effort in serials cataloging; shared responsibility for producing and maintaining high quality bibliographic records for serials; availability of records through the Library of Congress MARC Distribution Service; and, in general, LC quality control and leadership. Where CONSER's main emphasis has been the creation of new machine-readable records for serials, however, it is now evolving to a mix of creating new records and maintaining existing ones, with an increasing emphasis on the latter. Moreover, the trend of the project has been toward more online activity and away from paper handling so that, for example, it is now possible for a participant to report to New Serial Titles online directly to OCLC. Participants now also have the option of authenticating their own records, as well as making online modifications to records already authenticated by LC. Participants are encouraged to join NACO, LC's Name Authority Cooperative Project, and many have done so. The number of participants has increased—there are currently 22 participants—as has the number of institutions to which CONSER capability has been extended, including several special members such as participants in the U.S. Newspapers Program and the CONSER A & I Coverage Project.

Despite considerable achievements, much remains to be done. Questions that face CONSER's participants and coordinators include the following: What aspects of CONSER should be strengthened or expanded, eliminated, or left as they are? Are there appropriate new initiatives and directions to be taken? What statistical records should be kept, how should they be used, and how most efficiently collected and produced? What organizations ought to have responsibility for CONSER operations and decision making, and how can operations and decisions be handled most effectively? Should new members be solicited and, if so, how? Is there a role for publishers, producers of abstracting and indexing services, and subscription agencies? Other topics to be addressed are standards, including the implications and opportunities afforded by the Open Systems Interconnection standard on which the Linked Systems Project is based and by the impending implementation of the MARC Format for Holdings and Locations; quality control; communication among participants; online entry, maintenance, and distribution of records on RLIN and WLN as well as OCLC; and shared information on cataloging priorities.

Persons who would like more information on the study and those who would like to contribute to it should contact Mr. Heynen at the ARL Office.

Index to LCIB Published

The Library of Congress Professional Association has published the 1984 index to the Library of Congress Information Bulletin. Special attention has been given in the index to bringing out the detailed subject content of Bulletin articles, with indexing terminology based on Library of Congress Subject Headings. LCPA plans to publish the index on an annual basis. The cost of LCPA's Index to the Library of Congress Information Bulletin for 1984 is $10.00 per copy. Orders (prepaid only) may be sent to LCPA, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. Note: The index is not a government publication nor is it an official publication of the Library.

APPENDIX E

6565 Frantz Road Dublin, Ohio 43017-0702 (614) 764-6000 TWX 810-339-2026

CONSER Participants Meeting Summary

June 18, 1985

OCLC
Dublin, Ohio

Topics for Discussion

*CONSER A&I Project Update
*US Newspaper Project Update
UK MARC Licensing Update
*Self-Authentication Process
*LSP/NACO Plans
*CONSER Future and Membership Study
*Restructuring of OCLC's Pricing Policy
*CONSER Management Statistics

Attendees

Name	Institution
L. Bartley	Library of Congress
Ruth Carter	University of Pittsburgh
Barbara Dean	Council on Library Resources
K. Dobbs	Library of Congress
Anita Farber	University of Texas at Austin
David Goldberg	National Agricultural Library
Christa F. B. Hoffman	National Library of Medicine
Jeffrey Heynen	Association of Research Libraries
Ed Jones	Harvard University
Barbara McNamara	Boston Theological Institute
Jorge E. Ponce	Government Printing Office
Mary Price	Library of Congress
Suzanne Shaw	University of Florida
Odette Shepherd	Indiana University
Sue Ellen Sloca	US Department of the Interior
John Stegenga	National Library of Canada
J. Van der veer Judd	New York State Library
Barbara Von Wahlde	University of Michigan
Ron Watson	UCLA
Todd Butler	OCLC
Mary Kay Jackson	OCLC
Mary Ellen Jacob	OCLC

*Handout attached.

CONSER A&I Project

Project is almost complete. Approximately 150,000 510's have been added to CONSER records. Fewer new titles were added than expected. Only 42% of the titles were US. See attached report for more detail.

US Newspaper Project

35,000 records have been added for newspapers. Eight repositories and 9 states are contributing records. All records are distributed through the LC MARC Serials Distribution Service.

UK MARC

LC is providing a conversion service for UK MARC. OCLC has been negotiating a license agreement with the British Library. Major problem has been third party use; i.e., resale by OCLC members to third parties. The proposed agreement would be for one year. Serial records would have to be manually loaded.

Self-Authentication

See attached handout.

LSP/NACO

Indiana University has been invited by OCLC and LC to act as an "pioneer" in assisting the testing of LSP for NACO contribution. NACO entries will be created on an OCLC terminal, reviewed by LC staff for a trial period, and sent to LC for distribution. Eventually all OCLC-CONSER-NACO libraries will have access to OCLC-LSP-NACO facilities. (See attached description.)

CONSER Future

Jeff Heynen and Julia Blixrud, Association of Research Libraries, are undertaking a study of CONSER goals and objectives, membership, and procedures. A report will be available for distribution to participants the end of September for review and discussion at the Fall CONSER Participants Meeting. (See attached work statement.)

OCLC Pricing Change

No change is contemplated for CONSER Participants. OCLC will continue to credit replace activity and will not charge active CONSER Participants for searching. For details of charges for other users, see attached.

CONSER Management Statistics

Todd Butler reviewed the CONSER Statistics 1979-1985. OCLC was urged to collect statistical data automatically when ever possible. The major barrier is the requirement for separate three-letter codes by the statistics program. Separate codes result in a need to reset codes later, credits when the same institution uses the records for their purposes, or special instructions to

staff and users on codes used. Most institutions are not recording work related to successive entry creation. Updated report attached.

CONSER Editing Guide

A new version of the Editing Guide is in preparation. See attached table of contents.

Multiple Version of Records

LC has a contractor studying problems associated with multiple records for different media. Concerns relate to reducing effort needed to create and use records (see attached).

Next Meeting of the CONSER Participants

Suggested dates for the next meeting of the CONSER Participants follow. Please get in touch with Sandy Bailey in Mary Ellen Jacob's office, [614] 764-6063 and indicate your availability.

October 28
October 29
October 31
November 11
November 12
November 15

Topics for discussion will include:

OCLC Billing Charges
CONSER Future Study
LSP Update
Multiple Version Recommendation

JUST A REMINDER!

If you have not already done so, expense reports for air travel (or equivalent) must be filed before June 30. Submit to M. Jacob, OCLC MC #249.

FOR OUR RECORDS....

Enclosed is a copy of our current mailing list of CONSER Participants. Please take a moment to update if needed and return to Sandy Bailey at OCLC. Thank you.

MEJ/sb
850623

APPENDIX F

Individuals Contacted

Idalia Acosta, National Agricultural Library
Anita Anker, MINITEX
Henriette Avram, Library of Congress
Linda K. Bartley, Library of Congress
Toni Carbo Bearman, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
Alison Beatty, National Library of Medicine
Karen Bendorff, Research Libraries Group
Lee Blauvelt, Chemical Abstracts Service
Marjorie Bloss, Illinois Institute of Technology
Isabel Bradley, ISDS/Canada
Rowland C.W. Brown, OCLC
Edwin B. Brownrigg, Division of Library Automation, University of California
Brett Butler, In-Four
Todd Butler, OCLC
Ruth Carter, University of Pittsburgh
Gary Charbonneau, Indiana University
Jean Cook, Iowa State University
Monica Craven, U.S. Department of Interior
Jay Cunningham, California State Library
Carol Davis, OCLC
Barbara Dean, Council on Library Resources
Thomas Delsey, National Library of Canada
Kim Dobbs, Library of Congress
Richard Dougherty, University of Michigan
Anita Farber, University of Texas at Austin
Susan Fayad, Michigan Library Consortium
Dorothy Glasby, Library of Congress
David Goldberg, National Agricultural Library
Diane Harkins, Duke University
Robert Harriman, Library of Congress
Florence Hayes, Cornell University
Judy Herrick, Library of Congress
Jean Hirons, Library of Congress
Christa Hoffman, National Library of Medicine
Elizabeth Hofsas, Yale University
Joseph Howard, National Agricultural Library
Carol Ishimoto, Harvard University
Mary K. Jackson, OCLC
Mary Ellen Jacob, OCLC
C. Lee Jones, Council on Library Resources
Edgar Jones, Harvard University
J. Van der Veer Judd, New York State Library
Fred Kilgour, OCLC
Gary Lawrence, University of California Systemwide Administration
John Levy, Library of Congress
Barbara MacNamara, Boston Theological Institute
Richard McCoy, Research Libraries Group

Carol A. Mandel, University of California, San Diego
Karla D. Petersen, Center for Research Libraries
Susan K. Phillips, University of Texas at Austin
Mary Sauer Price, Library of Congress
Ellen Rappaport, State University of New York
Lucia Rather, Library of Congress
Jutta Reed-Scott, Brandeis University Libraries
Regina Reynolds, Library of Congress
Wendy Riedel, Library of Congress
Joseph Rosenthal, University of California, Berkeley
Ryburn Ross, Cornell University
Judy Shannon, University of Washington
Odette Shepherd, Indiana University
Sue Ellen Sloca, U.S. Department of Interior
David Stam, New York Public Library
Dea Statkowski, OCLC
John Stegenga, National Library of Canada
Edward Swanson, Minnesota Historical Society
Robert Tannehill, Jr., Chemical Abstracts Service
Suzanne Thomas, University of Pittsburgh
Lois N. Upham, Indiana State Library
Ann Vidor, Georgia Institute of Technology
Sharon Walbridge, OCLC
Helen Walzer, Georgia Institute of Technology
Ron Watson, University of California, Los Angeles
William J. Welsh, Library of Congress
Alice Wilcox, University of Minnesota
Nancy Williams, University of Florida

APPENDIX G

Recommendations

For clarity and ease of reference, the recommendations in Chapter IV are identified by the letter of the section in which they appear in the report and by a sequence number within section. The organization of the management section forced a departure from this pattern. There, sequencing is by letter as well as number. Recommendations in Chapter V are given in the form "5A," "5B," "5C1," "5C2," etc.

General

A1. CONSER needs to continue. It is a valuable project having many existing and potential uses. It should adopt a policy of evolutionary change.

B1. Continue to use the name "CONSER" to describe this cooperative activity and continue to use "project." These terms emphasize the existence of a specific plan for engaging in a large undertaking and suggest the intention to communicate with and involve non-participants.

C1. CONSER should be defined as a cooperative program to build and maintain a machine-readable database of authoritative bibliographic information for serials. This definition, including augmentations and variations, should continue to be used for CONSER. Encouraging a broadly based definition also fosters broadly-based thinking on the goals and objectives of CONSER.

D1. CONSER's mission, its goals, and its objectives need to be reviewed. CONSER's tenth anniversary is an opportune time for creating and implementing a strategic plan of action embodying a revised and updated mission, goals, and objectives. Current opportunities for improvement should be recognized and a new mission, goals, and objectives set as required to take advantage of these opportunities. This is a good time to give the project a new impetus.

D2. In order to assist CONSER in the strategic planning effort, a preliminary structure has been developed. Many of the study recommendations are incorporated into the structure. Strategic planning is a process and CONSER's stake-holders are encouraged to participate in this process.

D3. In conjunction with this process of review, re-statement, and planning, the project should establish means for publicizing what it has done and has yet to do. In part, this should be done by wide involvement of librarians and other stake-holders in the process; in part, it should be accomplished through a concerted public relations effort.

CONSER Database

E1. The CONSER database is an international resource and its participants must continue to build and maintain it.

E2. To identify current and potential products and services, CONSER should more intensively investigate how the database is used by the information community and incorporate the results of this investigation into its planning and public relations program.

E3. CONSER should undertake a systematic review of the current database to identify gaps. Included in the review should be an examination of the content of serials files not yet in CONSER and of the possibility of merging them with the CONSER database. Upon completion of the investigation appropriate remedies should be implemented to reduce the gaps. Priorities for these remedies should be established and member institutions who could fill gaps should be actively encouraged to participate in CONSER.

E4. CONSER should continue to develop and articulate its policies regarding database inconsistency. It should create a clear statement to explain the reasons why inconsistencies developed (such as changes in cataloging rules) and set forth procedures both for removing existing inconsistencies and for preventing new occurrences. The statement should set out the project's level of tolerance for inconsistencies among records, its priorities for dealing with them, and its plan for effecting these priorities. In addition, it should describe concisely, in terms readily understood by serials catalogers and other users of serial records, the different types of inconsistent serial records and should give guidance on coping with these inconsistencies.

F1. An investigation should be made of the data elements and cataloging rule interpretations that will be needed to handle the new forms of serial publications and to serve the new uses that may be given to serial records as the process of automation accelerates. This investigation could result in a new minimum set of data elements or in a number of data element sets each applicable to a different category of serial titles (ceased publications, for example, might be given different treatment than current ones). Similarly, it could result in different sets of rule interpretations for different categories of serials.

F2. CONSER should impress upon OCLC the importance of increasing the record size capability in the online system to provide for the capacity to handle all necessary data elements and fields required for serial bibliographic records.

F3. CONSER should examine the differences between local and broader needs and divorce from its agreed-upon practices, as much as is practical, data needed locally but not in a North American or international context. The national libraries should, in

particular, examine the consequences that flow from their use of CONSER records for local purposes.

F4. In conjunction with these investigations, CONSER should study the costs and impacts that system and other changes mandate. The value of each change should be considered in light of both costs and difficulty of implementation. Although CONSER is not alone in having to respond to various system and other changes, the changing nature of serial publications themselves makes these investigations more critical.

F5. CONSER should produce and maintain a concise set of standards, policies, guidelines, and interpretations that consolidates the "agreed-upon practices".

F6. The process of record distribution should be fully explained to CONSER participants. Procedures for causing records to move through LC's internal processing should be given to the CONSER operational staff and explained in detail.

F7. The Cataloging Distribution Service should continue to provide CONSER records in machine-readable form.

F8. An investigation should be made into the possibility of consolidating the distribution of CONSER products so that all products contain the same record set. The market potential and usefulness of modifying and adding to existing distribution products should be analyzed, for example by making subsets available or products available on new media (e.g., CD-ROM).

F9. The implications of local systems development and their likely impact on CONSER should be examined. Should institutions not wish to participate in CONSER (because they have a well-developed local system) or participate through a variety of new and different means (instead of the historical mechanism of using the OCLC system), CONSER should explore those means to mitigate the potential impact or turn it to advantage.

F10. Trends in systems development other than at the local level also need to be monitored by CONSER. The immediate and long-term potential of the Linked Systems Project and of the emerging standards for Open Systems Interconnection should be investigated. Also relevant to this investigation is the distributed-processing planning already underway and within the bibliographic utilities. The changing systems environment and increasing technological capabilities at all levels can provide CONSER with assistance and new mechanisms to build and maintain the database.

Quality Control

G2.1. The Library of Congress is encouraged to complete the work of authenticating the 115,000 surrogates currently on hand and should expand its role in maintaining the database. LC should systematically check CONSER records using statistically valid

sampling techniques to assure database quality. LC should examine the NACO quality control program as a model for this spot-checking activity.

G2.2. OCLC should explore means, e.g. electronic mail, by which the system could alert participants of changes made to existing CONSER records. If possible this process should be an automated, or at least partially automated one.

G2.3. A similar investigation should be conducted concerning ways by which participants, particularly self-authenticating participants, can alert one another of changes they wish to make (or have made) in existing CONSER records. This system too might best operated through electronic mail.

G2.4. OCLC is encouraged to continue removing identified duplicate records from the database as well as to make appropriate changes in records identified by its member libraries.

Cataloging Rules

G3.1. CONSER should explore a method to more systematically convert records to AACR2.

G3.2. CONSER should seek to influence positive changes for cataloging rules affecting serials and develop an effective means for responding to any cataloging rule changes.

G3.3. CONSER should monitor the work being done for LC on the "multiple versions" problem. In light of the trend towards an increase in the differing formats for delivery of serial information products, multiple versions may provide a method for handling variant formats for serials.

Database Maintenance

G4.1. CONSER should give database maintenance as high a priority as record contribution.

G4.2. In addition to identifying the data elements necessary for a record, CONSER should identify those elements that warrant editing.

G4.3. CONSER should identify the institutions responsible for maintenance of necessary data elements.

G4.4. CONSER should seek out efficient methods for making changes to records in the database. In particular, an examination should be conducted into how technology could best be used to make repetitive or block changes.

G4.5. In tandem with the recommendation on quality control, OCLC should explore a means by which the system could alert users of CONSER records to maintenance changes.

G4.6. CONSER should examine the impact of changes to the bibliographic file and the redistribution of records to subscribers. The possibilities of selective distribution of record subsets for system maintenance should be explored.

NACO

G5.1. All existing and new CONSER participants should be required to to participate in NACO. Those that cannot join NACO should be required to give a persuasive explanation of reasons for not doing so.

G5.2. CONSER should provide non-NACO institutions with the necessary information and support that they can use as incentives for participation with their parent institutions.

Self-Authentication

G6.1. CONSER should redefine its records as those that are authenticated and distributed through MARC-Serials.

G6.2. CONSER should provide and distribute an explanation of the codes in the MARC 042 field to better describe records authenticated by its participants and Centers of Responsibility.

G6.3. CONSER should encourage all existing and new CONSER participants to self-authenticate. It should examine the possibility that self-authentication be a prerequisite of becoming a CONSER participant.

G6.4. CONSER should produce and distribute a description of self-authentication giving information on its origins, value, and purpose. It should improve the description of self-authentication that appears in the CONSER brochure.

G6.5. The Library of Congress should establish a mechanism to monitor the quality of self-authenticated records.

Training

G7.1. The Library of Congress should establish on-going training programs for new and existing participants.

G7.2. CONSER participants should take advantage of their resident expertise to help each other develop internal training programs for new staff.

G7.3. In addition to traditional instruction, computer-assisted and video training should be explored by CONSER, as should internships.

Linked Systems Project

G8.1. Since very few people understand how LSP will work, CONSER's stake-holders should educate themselves on the project and its potential. Once educated, they should examine ways in which CONSER could benefit from LSP and incorporate those ways in the work to achieve the goals derived from this study.

G8.2. With the possibility of a linked systems project for CONSER, the issues of uploading, downloading, and modifying records at both the local and national level must also be addressed by CONSER's stake-holders.

G8.3. CONSER cannot and should not take the role of LSP developer, but it should influence LSP developments so that they favor the CONSER project, or at the very least, do not interfere with it.

G8.4. CONSER should be considered the primary candidate for the first LSP bibliographic link.

Holdings

G9.1. CONSER should not try to be the primary moving force toward implementation of the USMARC Format for Holdings and Locations. The options for implementing the USMARC Holdings and Locations Format within CONSER should be explored. The expected costs (in effort required to implement as well as in dollars) and anticipated benefits need to be carefully considered. CONSER should be alert to ways in which it can benefit from the work that others (e.g. libraries in the Southeast and Harvard) are doing in this area.

G9.2. CONSER should consider the implications of and continue to monitor local adaptations of the holdings format to the national database.

Documentation

G10.1. The work on the CONSER Editing Guide should be brought to conclusion quickly.

G10.2. CONSER should establish a documentation review process.

G10.3. Inconsistencies between CONSER and OCLC documentation should be eliminated when possible.

Statistics

H1. CONSER should determine what statistics will accurately reflect the nature of, and activity within, the database.

H2. Statistics given to participants should include, at least:

The number of serial records in the OCLC database
The number of serial records in the MARC-Serials file
The number of new CONSER records created each year
The number of records CONSER participants modified each year
The number of records self-authenticated

H3. CONSER should advise OCLC on the need to develop a method to create and maintain statistics automatically.

H4. CONSER should provide an annual detailed statistics report to its participants and a summary report for public distribution.

H5. CONSER should use detailed database statistics available from either OCLC or the Library of Congress as management tools. For example, statistics can be used to monitor record quality by looking for unusual subfield patterns or tag combinations and to identify gaps in the database by looking for missing codes or values.

Costs

I1. CONSER should accept the suggestions made in the June Participants' meeting:

Monitor implementation of OCLC's new pricing structure and make adjustments if its implementation should prove to be unfair to CONSER participants.
Attempt to find means by which OCLC does not routinely assign special library identifiers to CONSER participants for billing purposes.
Urge OCLC to investigate ways to change the billing mechanism so that it is more flexible and requires less paperwork from participants.
Since some participants must justify costs of local CONSER operations to management, systematically provide ammunition for them.

I2. CONSER should explore the feasibility of conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the project.

I3. CONSER participants who are also NACO and self-authenticating members should be encouraged to share their cost information with interested parties.

I4. CONSER should support investigatory efforts to make serials cataloging more efficient.

Membership

J1. An active Membership Committee should be re-established for CONSER. It should be composed of a representative from each of the following: Library of Congress, National Library of Canada, OCLC, Participant Group, and Advisory Group. The Committee should review applications and make recommendations to the Participants Group for vote and confirmation.

J2. CONSER should provide for different levels of membership: Full, Partial, Temporary.

J3. Applications for Full Membership in CONSER should include:

a) Desire to participate in a cooperative program
b) Willingness to abide by the "agreed-upon principles"
c) Demonstration that current serials cataloging conforms to national and international standards
d) Sufficient institutional resources to support participation
e) Institutional commitment to send staff to LC for training
f) Willingness to support continuing education for staff
g) Willingness to participate in NACO
h) Willingness to self-authenticate
i) Contribution of complete bibliographic information for current serials cataloging
j) Willingness to have work reviewed

J4. Partial CONSER membership should be available to institutions who provide specific types of information to records in the database (such as frequency and subscription information), who are willing to perform a maintenance function (e.g., providing necessary links among bibliographic records), or who are using the CONSER database as a means to facilitate the building of associated files (such as the U.S. Newspaper Program).

J5. Temporary CONSER membership should be available to those institutions who are planning to conduct major retrospective conversion projects and are willing to invest the additional resources necessary to provide the name-authority and self-authentication work.

J6. The burder of proof for CONSER membership should be after the fact of acceptance and institutions who cannot live up to their commitments should ask to withdraw.

J7. Membership should be expanded as quickly as LC training and the OCLC system can support it.

J8. New participants who can fill gaps in CONSER coverage should be sought out. CONSER should make use of the National

Shelflist Count and the North American Collections Inventory Project to identify institutions with needed subject strengths.

J9. The Membership Committee should use database statistics to monitor quantitative levels of participation. Information on the quality of participant contributions should be provided regularly to the Membership Committee by the Library of Congress.

J10. CONSER should develop a system for giving warnings to libraries whose work does not meet membership requirements. Those that do not respond to these warnings within a period of one year should be dropped from membership.

J11. Potential library members who are willing to participate in NACO and the self-authentication program should be given priority over other potential members.

J12. CONSER should investigate third-party arrangements by which participants may systematically create CONSER records that are originated by libraries or other organizations (e.g., contractors, union list participants) that are in neither CONSER nor OCLC).

J13. Subscription agencies, such as Faxon and Ebsco, should be encouraged to participate in CONSER as Partial Members.

J14. The participation of A&I services through the CONSER A&I Coverage Project should continue to be supported. Additional means for participation should be explored with assistance from the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services.

J15. Possible roles for publishers within CONSER, in addition to NSDP cooperation, should be encouraged and developed with assistance from the American Association of Publishers.

J16. The relationship between the ISDS and the CONSER database and their agencies (e.g., NSDP, ISDS/Canada, and the International Centre of the ISDS) should be explored.

J17. A closer relationship with national libraries in other major MARC countries should be explored. These countries include the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan.

Management

KA. CONSER's current organizational structure is appropriate and reasonably effective. Its democratic nature is desirable in a cooperative project; indeed it could be emulated by other cooperative projects that have since been developed. Nonetheless, it can and should be improved.

KB. The Library of Congress should take responsibility for superintending consideration of the CONSER study and subsequent action to create a plan of action for the project.

K1.1. The CONSER Advisory Group should be rejuvenated and given the task of advising the Participants Group on the elements of a strategic plan for CONSER's future.

K2.1. The CONSER Participants Group should be the policy-makers for the CONSER Project.

K2.2. The CONSER Participants Group should set its own meetings. The group should consider electing a chair and vice-chair/chair-elect and give these individuals responsibility for presiding at meetings and coordinating meeting tasks with LC, NLC, and OCLC.

K2.3. The CONSER Participants Group should consider the possibility of incorporating itself in order to codify the unwritten rules under which it operates and guarantee its possession of final decision-making authority within the project.

Library of Congress

K3.1. The Library of Congress should continue to participate in and provide project management for the CONSER Project.

K3.2. The role of the Library of Congress within CONSER should be enlarged by taking advantage of the potential of the Office of the CONSER Coordinator to provide a means for CONSER coordination.

K3.3. The Coordinator's Office should establish a documentation clearinghouse and should become a central node in a network for electronic communications among participants. In addition, it should act as a central source for information on all aspects of the project barring those that directly concern OCLC's operations.

K3.4. The Coordinator's Office should also be responsible for designing and implementing the training and quality review programs for CONSER.

K3.5. In carrying out the recommended enlarged responsibilities, the CONSER Coordinator's Office should maintain close communication with OCLC.

National Library of Canada

K4.1. The National Library of Canada should continue to provide project management for CONSER with the Library of Congress and OCLC.

K4.2. The National Library of Canada should continue to provide the authentication for Canadian imprints.

K4.3. The National Library of Canada should take an active role with the Library of Congress to develop needed training and quality control programs for CONSER participants.

OCLC

K5.1. OCLC should continue as the host system for the CONSER database and as database manager.

K5.2. CONSER should lobby for desirable system changes within OCLC that would result in more cost-effective participation for its participants.

Additional

L1. The CONSER Coordinator at LC should be given the responsibility and authority for consideration of this study and the subsequent plan of action.

5A. CONSER should promote itself and provide accurate and timely information to the library profession to use in articles about serials.

5B. CONSER should begin efforts to examine subject access to serials records by investigating its own practices, promoting research, and offering technical expertise.

5C1. CONSER should be examining and exploring the impact changes in serial publishing may make for bibliographic control.

5C2. CONSER should participate and encourage research in projects that investigate the changing nature of serial publishing.

5D. CONSER and OCLC should develop a statement on copyright of the CONSER database.

5E. CONSER should continue to be aware of the use of bibliographic utilities other than OCLC as it makes future system plans.

5F1. CONSER's participants and management should support the development of other programs designed to cooperatively build files and eliminate duplication of effort.

5F2. CONSER should learn about and monitor the development of any systems designed to provide interactive links for bibliographic files.

APPENDIX H

CONSER Goals and Objectives

CONSER I (See pages 1 - 3 of the report.)

Goal:

To create a large, machine-readable serials database, of as high a quality as possible within a reasonably short time, in order to satisfy the burgeoning need by many libraries.

Objectives:

1. To assist the national libraries of both countries (Canada and the United States) in the establishment of a computer-maintained (and hopefully remotely accessible) serials data system. This would be accomplished partly by the very existence of the resulting database, and partly by the experience gained in its establishment.

2. To assist in the definition of the roles of the regional or resource centers in such enterprises.

3. To provide a source database for use within the International Serials Data System, and to seek the active participation of the Canadian and United States ISDS National Centers.

CONSER II (See page 6 of the report.)

Goal:

To improve user success in obtaining desired information from serially published materials.

Objectives:

1. Improve the bibliographic control of serials across institutions.

2. Promote the use of unique identifiers (key title and International Standard Serial Number) by libraries and other secondary information services such as abstracting and indexing services and publishers.

3. Improve the accumulation of and the access to location information for more effective interlibrary loan and resource sharing.

1979 Redefinition (See pages 9 - 10 of the report.)

Goal:

To continue to enlarge and improve a core database of bibliographic information on serial titles available for use on the international, national, regional, and local levels.

Objectives:

1. To provide a reliable and authoritative serials database to meet the needs of library patrons, other users of information, and the developing national and international bibliographic networks.

2. To assist the national libraries of both Canada and the United States in the establishment and maintenance of a machine-readable serials database.

3. To support the interface of national serials database activities with the programs of international serials systems -- including the participation of the National Serials Data Program (NSDP) and ISDS/Canada in the International Serials Data System (ISDS).

4. To support local, regional, national, and international serial union list activities.

5. To ensure the use of nationally and internationally accepted standards, rules, and conventions for building and maintaining serials bibliographic records.

6. To identify deficiencies in the database, such as subject, language, and retrospective coverage, and to implement appropriate remedies.

APPENDIX I

CONSER Plan of Action

Programs such as CONSER should consider why they do what they do, whether some of what they do is no longer needed, and whether new things might better be done. In requesting the consultants to prepare recommendations, LC has begun this process for CONSER. The report of which this appendix is a part can only be a beginning. It is up to CONSER itself to carry the process through to conclusion.

Using the consultants' recommendations as a starting point, CONSER should now begin a strategic planning program; that is, it should examine the recommendations, use them as the basis for constructing a plan of action, and implement the plan. Although this program will require a considerable amount of work, it can and should be done by dividing responsibilities cooperatively, in the manner of CONSER itself.

The Participants Group should take overall responsibility, establishing ad hoc committees within itself and drawing on the resources available within the Operational Staff Group and the Advisory Group as well as within LC, OCLC, and NLC. LC and OCLC should continue to take major leadership roles.

In the past few years the Council on Library Resources (CLR) has sponsored a number of effective "retreats" in which a carefully chosen group intensively studies and discusses a set of related issues and produces a plan for addressing these issues.

A recent example is the meeting that CLR held in July, 1984, at the Spring Hill Conference Center in Wayzata, Minnesota. The Council had commissioned a paper by Jutta Reed-Scott to identify issues in retrospective conversion. To discuss the paper and act upon it, the Council drew together 25 persons from LC, the bibliographic utilities, and major research libraries. The eventual result of their work is now in operation within the Association of Research Libraries: the ARL Recon Project for coordinating the conversion of 6 million monographic records within the coming decade.

LC, OCLC, the Council, or another organization should be asked to sponsor a similar intensive planning session for CONSER. It should be held no later than July 1986 and should include no more than 30 persons from LC; OCLC; NLC; the Participants, Operational Staff, and Advisory Groups; and others. These individuals should address the consultants' recommendations, giving priorities for them ranging from "not needed" to "essential," and giving levels of difficulty for them ranging from "easy" to "practically impossible." Using the results of this work, they should examine the mission, goals, and objectives of CONSER and prepare the outline of a plan of action which sets these forth along with the tasks needed to accomplish them, the

persons who will carry out these tasks, and the time-table for their work.

Suggestions for changes and improvements to CONSER have been proposed in the past. Unfortunately, many of these suggestions were not implemented. At ten years' of age, CONSER could benefit from a new sense of purpose and direction. Two key recommendations of the consultants are aimed at producing this rejuvenation: an increase in the role of the Library of Congress for CONSER administration and a CONSER plan of action.

The following is a beginning structure for the development of a strategic plan for CONSER. It is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Many of the study recommendations are included in this structure, but not all or even, necessarily, the most important of them. This appendix should not be considered a final document or distributed as one. A meeting of the participants and a selected group of interested individuals should enhance and continue to develop this proposed plan. Strategic planning is a process and CONSER should be engaging in that process in a systematic way.

As the structure shows, the plan should consist of: 1) the CONSER mission, 2) a statement of the CONSER goals, 3) a set of objectives designed to keep the program focused on the goals, 4) descriptions of the tasks to be done to achieve the objectives, 5) identification of the organizations responsible for carrying out the tasks, 6) suggestions for how the tasks could be carried out, and 7) a time frame to accomplish the tasks. A plan can provide the focus and direction currently lacking for CONSER. The plan should be structured enough to provide CONSER management with the necessary support to make choices about CONSER activities and resources, but flexible enough to allow for the opportunity to respond to changes in the environment and in CONSER's membership.

Because the Participants Group is intended to have primary responsibility for the plan, it is not always listed in the "Who" entries of the structure. Where the Group does not appear, it is to be understood to be present. The organizations given in the plan to carry out specific tasks are identified only at the institution level. Each organization is responsible for identifying the specific group, department, or individual within itself that will have the responsibility and authority for carrying out the task.

CONSER MISSION

The CONSER mission is cooperatively to build and maintain a comprehensive machine-readable database of authoritative bibliographic information for serial publications.

Discussion

The primary purpose of CONSER as written and articulated by individuals closest to it has always been to build a common machine-readable database for serials. This purpose should underlie all planning for the program.

The database is to be comprehensive. Because no one organization can collect or catalog all serial titles, the project can only be carried out through cooperative effort.

The information to be included in the CONSER database is to be authoritative and current. Consistency is impossible without authority and, as CONSER's original creators realized, consistency is one of the main requirements as well as a major benefit of cooperative cataloging. Serial publications are constantly changing and the CONSER database should be quick to reflect these changes. A critical element in CONSER's future success will be its ability to respond promptly.

Goal 1: CONSER should be a reliable international resource of information about serial publications for all users of information.

Objective 1.1: To create a large and useful serials information database

Task 1.1.1: Investigate how serial records are used by the information community

Who: CONSER Advisory Group, LC, NLC, OCLC

How: Conduct studies, review literature

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Task 1.1.2: Investigate how serials are accessed by users

Who: LC, Committee from Advisory, Participants, and Operational Groups

How: Conduct studies, review literature

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Task 1.1.3: Explore the possibility of adding to the file through machine-based loading of additional serials files

Who: Suggestions to come from the Library Community with exploration to be done by LC and OCLC

How: Invitations for suggestions to be communicated in project publicity and through widely distributed publications

When: On-going

Task 1.1.4: Identify deficiencies in the database and institute remedies to reduce them

Who: OCLC, NLC, LC, Advisory and Participants Groups

How: Analyze CONSER database by class and language

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Objective 1.2: To support local, regional, national, and international serial union list activities

Task 1.2.1: Investigate the relationship of the USMARC Format for Holdings and Locations to the CONSER bibliographic file

Who: LC, OCLC, Participants, other networks

How: Communication with those already implementing the format, technical studies

When: Within three years

Task 1.2.2: Improve the relationship of CONSER with the ISDS file

Who: NSDP, ISDS/Canada, LC, Advisory Group

When: Within three years

Objective 1.3: To widely distribute CONSER records

Task 1.3.1: Continue to distribute CONSER records in machine-readable form

Who: Cataloging Distribution Service

How: Subscription service

When: On-going

Task 1.3.2: Identify new products from the CONSER database

Who: Cataloging Distribution Service, NLC, Advisory Group, OCLC

When: On-going

Objective 1.4: To maintain the CONSER database

Task 1.4.1: Examine new methods for adding information on serial publication changes to the CONSER database

Who: LC, NLC, OCLC, Advisory Group

How: Discussions with serial subscription services, A&I services, publishers

When: On-going

Objective 1.5: To provide information about CONSER and its work to the information community

Task: 1.5.1 Improve newsletter and increase its distribution, make more effective use of the Library of Congress Information Bulletin, and prepare regular progress reports about CONSER to be distributed to the library and information trade press

Who: OCLC, LC, NLC

How: Contact participants for information

When: On-going

Goal 2: CONSER should be a leader in the areas of serials management, cooperative file-building, and the effective use of resources within the information community.

Objective 2.1: To identify issues appropriate for discussion by the information community

Task 2.1.1: Examine the differences between local and broader needs for and uses of serial records

Who: All CONSER participants and stake-holders

How: Coordinated through LC

When: *On-going*

Goal 3: CONSER should assist the two principal national libraries of the North American continent in the establishment and maintenance of a machine-readable serials database.

Objective 3.1: To support serials cataloging within the Library of Congress

Task 3.1.1: Examine LC local use of CONSER records

Who: LC, Operational Staff committee

When: Within three years

Objective 3.2: To provide support to the National Library of Canada

Task 3.2.1: Continue to investigate ways CONSER records can be more effectively used within the National Library of Canada's system

Who: NLC, LC, OCLC

When: On-going

Goal 4: CONSER should improve the bibliographic control of serials across institutions.

Objective 4.1: To promote the use of nationally and internationally accepted standards, rules, and conventions for building and maintaining serials bibliographic records

Task 4.1.1: Establish quality control program

Who: LC, NLC, Participants

When: Within first year

Task 4.1.2: Establish training program for all CONSER existing and new participants

Who: LC, NLC, Participants

When: Within first year

Task 4.1.3: Explore method of more systematically converting records to AACR2

Who: Committee composed of CONSER Participants and Operational staff

When: Within two years

Objective 4.2: To develop a more effective means for responding to cataloging rule changes

Task 4.2.1: Monitor developments in cataloging rules and respond to issues appropriate for CONSER

Who: Everyone associated with the CONSER program; funnel information to LC

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Task 4.2.2: Investigate the data elements and cataloging rules interpretations that may be needed in serving the new uses given serial records as the process of automation accelerates

Who: Committee from all Groups

How: Reading the literature, debate

When: Upon completion of investigation of use of serials records, On-going

Objective 4.3: To ensure a consistently high-quality serials information database

Task 4.3.1: Produce a concise set of standards, policies, guidelines, and interpretations that consolidate the "agreed-upon practices"

Who: Participants, LC, NLC

When: As part of next edition of the "Editing Guide" with updates as necessary

Task 4.3.2: Develop and articulate a CONSER policy regarding database inconsistencies

Who: Participants, LC, NLC

When: Within first year

Task 4.3.3: Work towards completing the authentication of all CONSER records

Who: LC, NLC, CONSER Participants

When: Within five years

Task 4.3.4: Explain the process of CONSER record distribution to operational staff as well as interested parties

Who: LC

When: At next Operational staff meeting and through documentation

Task 4.3.5: Investigate third-party arrangements by which participants may systematically create CONSER records that are originated by libraries or other organizations that are in neither CONSER nor OCLC

Who: Committee composed of Advisory Group, Participants, LC, OCLC

When: Within two years

Task 4.3.6: Eliminate backlog of duplicate record deletions for CONSER database

Who: OCLC

When: Within two years

Task 4.3.7: Continue to identify and eliminate duplicate records

Who: Records are identified by OCLC and CONSER staff in all institutions and OCLC staff perform necessary deletion

When: On-going

Goal 5: CONSER should operate in the most efficient manner possible.

Objective 5.1: To develop an effective governance plan for CONSER

Task 5.1: Re-establish Advisory Group

Who: Participants, LC, NLC, OCLC

How: Include education process

When: Within first year

Objective 5.2: To increase active membership in CONSER

Task 5.2.1: Articulate membership policy

Who: CONSER Participant Group, LC, NLC, OCLC

When: Within first year

Task 5.2.2: Re-establish Membership Committee

Who: CONSER Participant Group, CONSER Advisory Group, LC, NLC, OCLC

When: Within one year

Objective 5.3: Identify roles for non-library serial information providers.

Task 5.3.1: Work with NFAIS to strengthen the interaction of A&I services with the CONSER project

Who: NFAIS, CONSER A&I Project Advisory Committee, Participants

When: On-going

Task 5.3.2: Investigate means to include subscription services in CONSER project

Who: Committee including Faxon, Ebsco, and CONSER Advisory Group

When: On-going

Task 5.3.3: Investigate means to include serials publishers within CONSER

Who: Committee including American Assn of Publishers, members of Participants and Advisory Groups, NSDP, LC, and OCLC

When: On-going

Objective 5.4: To increase communications among CONSER participants

Task 5.4.1: Strengthen role of Office of CONSER Coordinator at the Library of Congress

Who: LC

When: Within two years

Task 5.4.2: Explore development of electronic mail system

Who: Committee of LC, NLC, OCLC, Participants, Operational Staff

When: Within two years, first report: fall 1986

Objective 5.5: To promote NACO membership

Task 5.5.1: Encourage all CONSER participants to also participate in NACO

Who: LC, NLC, CONSER NACO Participants

How: Provide sufficient information for participants to make informed decision, give priority to new participants that are also NACO participants or are willing to join NACO, request all who do not join NACO to explain why they do not

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Objective 5.6: To promote self-authentication

Task 5.6.1: Encourage all participants to become self-authenticating

Who: LC, NLC, Current selfauthenticating participants

How: Provide sufficient information for participants to make informed decision, give priority to new participants that are willing to self-authenticate, request all who do not self-authenticate to explain why they do not

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Task 5.6.2: Examine the codes used in the 042 and recommend changes if appropriate

Who: LC, NLC, Committee composed of Participants and Operational Staff

When: Within two years

Objective 5.7: To consider LSP as a means for creating a more broadly based system

Task 5.7.1: Supply substantive information on LSP to all CONSER participants

Who: LC and Bibliographic utilities

When: At earliest time possible

Objective 5.8: To provide high quality, useful documentation

Task 5.8.1: Continue the work of improving CONSER documentation

Who: LC

When: On-going

Task 5.8.2: Establish a review process for all CONSER documentation

Who: LC, Committee from Participants and Operational Staff

When: Within one year

Objective 5.9: To create more useful statistics

Task 5.9.1: Determine what statistics will accurately reflect the nature of and activity within the CONSER database

Who: Committee of LC, NLC, OCLC, Participants, Operational Staff

How: Review all previous management statistics available

When: Within one year

Task 5.9.2: Develop a method automatically to capture and maintain statistics

Who: Committee composed of LC, NLC, OCLC, Participants and Operational Staff

How: Examine options within current systems

When: Within one year

Objective 5.10: To identify and monitor costs

Task 5.10.1: Examine the costs and impacts of system changes on the CONSER project

Who: LC, NLC, OCLC, other systems using CONSER records

How: Provide necessary data

When: On-going, first report: fall 1986

Task 5.10.2: Examine the costs and impacts of record re-distribution on tape subscribers

Who: LC, OCLC

How: Survey, questionnaire

When: Within one year

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NETWORK PLANNING PAPERS

No. 1 Butler, Brett. A Nationwide Location Data Base and Service. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1978). 66 p.

No. 2 Dataflow Systems. A Glossary for Library Networking. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1978). 34 p.

No. 3 Buchinski, Edwin J. Initial Considerations for a Nationwide Data Base. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1978). 56 p.

No. 4 Network Technical Architecture Group. Message Delivery System for the National Library and Information Service Network: General Requirements. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1978). 35 p.

No. 5 Long, Philip L. Study of Message Text Formats: Bibliographic Search Queries. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1979). 28 p.

No. 6 Vondran, Raymond F. National Union Catalog Experience: Implications for Network Planning. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1980). 51 p.

No. 7 Document Delivery--Background Papers Commissioned by the Network Advisory Committee. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1982). various pagings.

No. 8 Public/Private Sector Interactions: The Implications for Networking. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1983). 48 p.

No. 9 Electronic Information Delivery Systems: Proceedings of the Library of Congress Network Advisory Committee Meeting, April 18-20, 1984. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1984). 79 p.

No.10 The Information Economy in the U.S.: Its Effect on Libraries and Library Networks: Proceedings of the Library of Congress Network Advisory Committee Meeting, November 14-16, 1984. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1985). 59 p.

No.11 Maruyama, Lenore S. The Library of Congress Network Advisory Committee, Its First Decade. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1985). 50 p.

No.12 Key Issues in the Networking Field Today: Proceedings of the Library of Congress Network Advisory Committee Meeting, May 6-8, 1985. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1985). 88 p.

No.13 Toward a Common Vision in Library Networking: Proceedings of the Library of Congress Network Advisory Committee Meeting, December 9-11, 1985. (Washington, Library of Congress, 1986) p. (in preparation)

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